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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER EDUCATION: CONTEXTUALIZING AND INTERPRETING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

by

JOHN DAVID MACKINNON

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Dated September.....30.... 1987

"The apparent fixedness of the printed page should not
blind us to the truly fluid, unstable, uncertain
nature of meaning in living, natural language.
Wide variations in interpretations of the
meaning of words occur in day-to-day
spoken language."

- Collins English Dictionary
1985:xxxiii

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER EDUCATION: CONTEXTUALIZING AND INTERPRETING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE submitted by John David MacKinnon in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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K.L. Ward

G.W. Clark
External Examiner

Date: September 30, 1987

DEDICATION

To my mother, Bliss Marie (Cleveland) MacKinnon, of Wolfville, Nova Scotia; and to the memory of my father, John Campbell MacKinnon, late of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to contextualize and interpret the experiences of a group of prospective early childhood teachers during one academic term. The study took place during the second term of their "professional year," during which time they were engaged in both university course work and practice teaching at their preferred level.

The fieldwork and data analysis were guided by the basic tenets of symbolic interactionism as represented in the work of Herbert Blumer. Blumer's works were chosen because he expounds a more interpretive or phenomenological variety of symbolic interactionism. This seemed particularly apt for a study which had as its basic purpose the description and interpretation of experience.

In order to collect the data I became a participant observer in a class of twenty-seven Early Childhood education students at "Highlands University." Participant observation, as I have used it here, refers to a combination of interviewing, document analysis, introspection and direct participation and observation. During the university-based portion of the fieldwork I attended all classes and interacted regularly with the students, focusing specifically on the experiences of two key informants. When the students were placed in school classrooms for an eight week practicum, I visited four key informants weekly in order to explore their experiences. In addition, I maintained regular contact with eight secondary informants.

In each of the two data chapters, one on the university experience and the other on the practicum, I have represented the students' experiences in a thematic manner. Each theme constitutes an aspect of professional preparation

which took on significant meaning for the informants. In a subsequent chapter, their experiences are organized and discussed from three different frames of reference: (1) the relationship between their evolving experiences and how the informants' defined their situations; (2) teacher education as a socialization experience; and (3) implications for the design of professional preparation programs.

The study closes with a short chapter of personal reflections on the research process and baccalaureate teacher education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals have made significant contributions to the successful completion of this work. To each and every one of them I am most appreciative.

My wife, Anne, has both encouraged and supported this project from its inception. In addition, she has acted as an editor, reading and commenting on every chapter of this thesis. I am truly lucky to have had her love, encouragement, and suggestions during this three year trek.

To my children, Beth and Jamie, I offer a heartfelt "thanks." I'm sure it hasn't been easy having a father who was home so rarely and who, when he was home, frequently showed the strains and stresses of his work. Maybe we can change that now.

My supervisor, Dr. Al MacKay, has been a source of constant support, encouragement and critical feedback. I couldn't have asked for anyone better.

All of the members of my on-campus committee, Dr. Myer Horowitz, Dr. Janis Blakey, Dr. Mary Young and Dr. Ken Ward have contributed significantly to this work. I wish for them to know that I am truly grateful for their wise and patient counsel.

I also wish to thank Dr. Christopher M. Clark, of Michigan State University, for consenting to be my external examiner.

Those who actually took part in the study must, of course, remain anonymous. Without their voluntary participation this work would never have been completed. Unfortunately, a brief "thank you" on a page such as this comes nowhere near to expressing how I truly feel about their contributions. Each of them, I'm sure, understands that, and will thus know what I mean when I say that I don't know how to thank them.

To my colleagues and close friends, Beth Young, Lloyd

Steier, Borkur Hansen, Mary Ann McLees and Darlene Elliott, I can only say that I have been lucky to have been here at the same time as they. In a less direct way, their contributions have been substantial.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The responsibility for providing a formal education, while filtering through various governmental and local control structures, ultimately rests with the multitude of classroom teachers with whom children regularly interact. Research on effective teaching (Brophy and Good, 1986) is demonstrating that what a teacher chooses to do in the classroom has a significant influence on the academic performance of the students. But perhaps more importantly, the potential influence of teachers on the thoughts, feelings and actions of young children, by virtue of sustained social contact, is momentous.

The formal preparation of these teachers has become largely the prerogative of the university. While program length and structure may vary, course work tends to be organized into three components: a general liberal education, subject matter specializations and pedagogical studies (Lanier, 1984:68). In addition, a field component or practicum is invariably included and is commonly identified as the *sine qua non* of preservice preparation. The efficacy of these programs, however, has been and continues to be the topic of much debate among academics and practitioners. Some argue that their impact, at best, is short-lived (e.g., Arnstine, 1979), while others underscore their importance by stating that the education of society can rise no higher than the qualifications of its teachers

(Corrigan, 1982:37). Lament is frequently heard about the distance between a typical curriculum in a teacher education program and a strong intellectual orientation (e.g., Lanier, 1984:73). Indeed, Cortis (1985:14) likens teacher preparation to medieval craft guilds which were typified by an apprenticeship model. Such an emphasis on the practical or technical has led many to suggest that the practicum is primarily a socialization into the world of schools (e.g., Iannaccone, 1963:73), and others to suggest that this socialization has frequently been at the expense of intellectual activity (e.g., Patterson, 1984:38). The theory-practice dichotomy also finds frequent expression in the teacher education literature (e.g., Miller and Taylor, 1984) and is supported by comments from practitioners in the field, such as that made by a 23 year old elementary school teacher with two years of classroom experience (Kushel and Madon, 1974:139):

> It's not that all my education courses up until student teaching made little sense, ... most of what they had to say had little application to the day-to-day realities of teaching, unfortunately.

More recently, criticism has focused on whether or not a substantial data base has been established upon which to design the skills component of teacher education programs. A large body of research has developed in the area of teacher effectiveness, with many proponents asserting that certain teacher behavioural variables relate positively to student achievement (e.g., Brophy and Good, 1986). Yet others consider that to "shatter" social interaction into dependent and independent variables is an overly simplistic view of human behaviour (e.g., Tabachnick, 1981:77). Finally, there are those who suggest that a complete social analysis of teacher education institutions is in order (e.g., Clarke, 1984:48).

Surprisingly, researchers have only recently begun to focus in any serious manner on the world of the prospective teacher. Although possibly explained, in part, by ideological orientations to research, this "oversight" seems remarkable in that the most basic intent of a teacher education program is to have a positive and modifying influence on these individuals. It was here, amid the experiences of education students, that this study was based.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to contextualize and interpret the meaning which selected teacher candidates gave to their university classroom and practicum experiences during one academic term. In other words, I wanted to know what it was like to be a student in a teacher education program. I was looking for an understanding of the aspects of these experiences which took on significant meaning for the participants.

The need to contextualize the meanings individuals attach to their experiences necessitated my becoming familiar with the settings in which they interact in an attempt to "capture" their experiences as they unfolded. As the study is founded on a conceptualization of meaning as being socially derived, meaning and context are indivisible, and any attempt to discuss meaning devoid of the context in which it is assigned is, in and of itself, meaningless.

Guiding Questions

I have not constructed hypotheses to guide this inquiry because I didn't set out to test anything.

Hypotheses assume a knowledge of what one is looking for, and I entered the field with little idea of what I wanted to find. [The rationale for this stance is explored in greater detail in chapter 2.] Instead, I adopted a grounded theory *orientation* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), but I avoided rigid adherence to a prescribed data collection technique. In the absence of formal hypotheses, three questions were constructed to guide the study:

1. What aspects of the university classroom experience take on significant meaning for the teacher candidates?
2. What aspects of the practicum experience take on significant meaning for the teacher candidates?
3. Are aspects of the university classroom experience altered or reinforced as the teacher candidates move through the practicum?

Need for the Study

In spite of the quantity of research which has been undertaken, the persistence of nagging questions relating to the dubious impact of preservice preparation (e.g., Lortie, 1975:81) attests to the dismal knowledge base which has been generated. Addressing the recent history of research on the students of teaching Lanier (1984:31) uses descriptives such as "...desultory in nature, poorly synthesized, and weakly criticized." Hersom (1984:255) describes teacher education as having suffered either from neglect or an all-too-exclusive focus on the practicum. Amid the orientations and foci which past researchers have taken, there is an obvious lack of activity which centres on the emerging experiences of prospective teachers as they engage in preservice preparation. Even with the aforementioned emphasis on the practicum, Adler (1984:15) points out that the dynamic nature of that experience has received scant attention. Such a situation raises questions about the reasons for this neglect, and why an increased focus is warranted.

The sparsity of research of an experiential nature undoubtedly reflects prevailing orientations to methodology which exist at given times in history. Research in teacher education, and in education generally, has been dominated for much of this century by an empirical-analytical approach which is premised on three axioms: (1) the discovery of scientific laws which can be used to predict human behaviour; (2) the assumption that behaviour has characteristics which are independent of personal intentions and motives; and (3) the belief that researchers must maintain an appropriate distance from the phenomenon to guarantee neutrality and control subjectivity (Popkewitz et al., 1979:52). Such an orientation has tended to exclude the adoption of ethnographic-type approaches to knowledge generation which characterize many studies in sociology and, more specifically, cultural anthropology. While this form of research is by no means new to education, it has only recently gained widespread recognition and acceptance (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982:3).

Thomas Kuhn, in his classic work The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, documents the changing nature of scientific thought and the accepted values and methods that may typify the (natural science) research community at any time. He terms these accepted examples of practice "paradigms" (Kuhn, 1970:10), and likens paradigmatic shifts to "revolutions" (Kuhn, 1970:12). While there are differences between social research and natural science research (one might argue that the social sciences are, at best, pre-paradigmatic), the types of questions asked and methods employed are nonetheless guided by, or at least

4

betray, the assumptions which underlie a particular view of the social world. In the area of teacher education, as with other fields of education, greater emphasis is being placed upon the world of the individual. Rist (1982:x) describes this orientation to inquiry as bringing "...the study of human beings, *as human beings*, to center stage." Belanger (1984:68) emphasizes one particular aspect of the importance of this line of inquiry:

> What a teacher believes and values as a person and a professional is seen as the fundamental initiative for effectiveness as a teacher. This is not to suggest that skill and knowledge are unimportant but rather that the highest priority for consideration in teacher education is the attitudes, beliefs and values of the candidates.

The call for a concerted focus on individuals and their experiences as they pass through preservice programs has been made by a number of scholars (Ryan, 1980; Tabachnick, 1981; Tabachnick and Zeichner, 1984; Koehler, 1985; Wideen and Holborn, 1986; Cruickshank and Armaline, 1986). This study was, in part, a response to this appeal.

Theoretical Importance. Sears (1984:6) and Ralston (1980:11), conducting doctoral research of a nature similar to this study, have decried the current knowledge base in teacher education. Indeed, Sears somewhat sarcastically points out that more is known of native cultures on remote Pacific islands than is known of the values and outlooks of those who wish to become teachers.

This study contributes to our emerging understanding of the experience of being an education student and a student teacher. In addition, I have attempted to shed light on how prospective teachers view themselves as students and how this view of self is renegotiated as they become student teachers.

Practical Importance. The basic purpose of a teacher education program is to influence the pedagogical and curricular decisions made by prospective teachers once they become inservice practitioners. Becker et al. (1968:2) suggest that the best way to do this is to focus on students' views of their own experiences in an attempt to understand what influences those behaviours one wishes to influence. The relevance of this perspective should not be overlooked. To move toward an understanding of the meanings which students assign to their experiences is to better allow the instructor, the administrator, or the curriculum developer to assist those individuals in becoming teachers. Having conducted research on three first-year teachers Everett-Turner (1984:239) reflected on the significance of understanding the individual which is both revealing and sensitive in its basic humanness:

> The message that came through to me ... was how important it is to make a genuine effort to come to know each individual student in his or her uniqueness. While I realize one instructor cannot be everything to everyone, I am committed to making more time for personal encounters with individual and small groups of students, to find out what things are important in their lives and in what way I can help them in their becoming a teacher.

In addition, the organization and administration of teacher education programs can, and should, be informed by the experiences of its students. Problems which become evident in the day-to-day process of preservice preparation need to be addressed by decision makers if the process is to be made more meaningful to those it is intended to assist.

A Framework for Inquiry

The selection of a framework for any study requires an understanding of its purpose and, accordingly, of the concepts central to it. As previously outlined, "meaning" is the key concept in this study and one approach which addresses the interpretation of meaning, and subsequent behaviour, is symbolic interactionism.

The modern origins of symbolic interactionism are commonly traced to the thoughts and teachings of George Herbert Mead. A professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago from 1894 to 1931, Mead published relatively little during his lifetime, but had a profound impact on many of the sociology students who took his courses. Most notable among these, and one of the principal exponents of interactionism during this century, is Herbert Blumer.

Symbolic interactionism takes as its central focus the relationship between the individual and the larger social setting in which he or she interacts. This perspective essentially rests on three underlying assumptions about the individual in society: (1) that people act towards things based on the meaning these things have for them; (2) that the meaning of such things comes from the social interaction one has with others; and (3) that these meanings are handled and modified through an interpretive process (Blumer, 1969:2). This interpretive process, conceptualized as intermediary between stimulus and response, was considered by Mead to be critical in symbolic communication, as the same symbol can have different meanings in different contexts (Ritzer, 1983:163; Craib, 1984:73-74). Following from this, response is conceptualized as a constructed act based on the meaning which the individual has assigned through an interpretation of significant symbols.

Implicit in this perspective of behaviour is the view that the social world is composed of objects which are meaningless independent of human experience. Objects have meaning only because individuals attach meaning to them, and this meaning arises through social interaction. Furthermore, meaning does not exhibit a static quality, but varies with individuals and situations. As Denzin (1978:7) notes, "human experience is such that the process of defining objects is ever-changing, subject to redefinitions, relocations, and realignments."

At the heart of the interactionist view of human conduct is the assertion that each individual has a self. This means that individuals have the capacity to interact with themselves, i.e., become the object of their own actions, in the same way as they interact with others. Each person can make indications to himself or herself about their environment, consider alternative responses, and decide upon a suitable course of action. This process of self-indication is essentially a conversation with one's self through the use of significant symbols (Ritzer, 1983:163). Such a view of internal (with self) and external (with others) conversations has led Craib (1984:71) to designate symbolic interactionism as "society as conversation."

Conceptualized as a process, as opposed to a structure located within the human organism (Blumer, 1966:535), the self is absent at birth and in very young children, but develops as a result of social interaction (Mead, 1977:199). The enabling element in this development is the ability of the individual to view himself or herself from the standpoint of others. This capacity emerges during childhood socialization, a process in which Mead (in Charon, 1979: 65-68) indentified three stages: (1) a *preparatory stage* in which the infant imitates others, though being only imitation lacks symbolic understanding; (2) a *play stage*, emerging simultaneously with the acquisition of language, in which the child begins to adopt the perspective of (take the role of) certain key individuals - "significant others" - who serve as role models; and (3) a *game stage*, where the child develops the ability to adopt the perspectives of groups of individuals - "generalized other" - such that the self becomes defined from a generalized, societal perspective. By means of taking the role of others, each individual forms a concept of self.

Drawing from Shibutani (1955), Charon (1979:68) describes a fourth stage absent in Mead's typology, a *reference group stage*, in which the view of self is dependent upon the reference group (a specific generalized other) with which one interacts. As such, the way in which the self is presented is determined through social interaction with these groups and must be negotiated anew in new situations.

Meltzer (1967:12-13) has identified the major implications of selfhood for an understanding of social life: (1) an individual may interact with oneself, and through conceiving of oneself in a different way, can bring about change; (2) since acting toward oneself need not be overt, individuals have a mental life; and (3) the individual is viewed as having the ability to direct and control his or her behaviour and thus, unlike a simple stimulus response conception of human conduct, is not merely a passive agent.

As social participants, each individual establishes a framework in which interaction takes place. This is referred to as "defining the situation," an act which may serve to limit interaction, but is not deterministic. Definition of the situation emerged as a central concept in this study, and is explored in more detail in Chapter 6.

In consideration of the focus on the individual or the small group, symbolic interactionism is frequently termed a microsociology. While this has drawn much criticism, the interrelated concepts native to the perspective seem particularly appropriate for a study of the experiences of individual university students. The focus here is very much on the micro; on the world of a small group of individuals and the way they interpret their circumstances.

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

The assumptions I have carried into this study are essentially those underlying a symbolic interactionist perspective on the social world:

1. That each individual has a self and that behaviour is based upon the nature of the self-indications each makes regarding the objects and events which are evident in their social environment.
2. That each individual actively constructs reality by interpreting the meaning of their emerging experiences, and that this meaning is established by means of a shared symbol system enculturated through social interaction.
3. That individuals interact in a group situation by fitting together their respective lines of action.
4. That the meanings which individuals attach to their experiences can best be learned by "catching" these experiences as they unfold through a research process of frequent and sustained social interaction.
5. That individuals are capable of describing their feelings, beliefs and actions.
6. That the participants, with time, will not be abnormally guarded or reserved during formal and informal interaction with me.

In addition to these assumptions, I have identified two limitations of the study:

1. This study is limited by my ability to record and interpret ongoing social interaction.
2. Given the context-specific nature of social discourse, the results of this study may not be transferable to other individuals in other settings.

Lastly, I have specified three delimitations which have served to make the study manageable:

1. The study is delimited to a focus on a small number of individuals. Although I interacted will all twenty-seven members of the class wherever possible, the majority of the data have been provided by six key informants.
2. The study was largely restricted to one academic term.
3. The study only involved elementary education students minoring in early childhood.

Dissertation Organization

The remaining chapters in this dissertation have been organized in the following way. In Chapter 2, "Research Design and Methodology: A Logic of Justification," I detail my rationale for conducting the study in the way I did and outline the techniques which I employed. Chapter 3, "The Setting," provides the reader with a basic overview of the program in which the Early Childhood students were enrolled, and a brief biography of each of the key informants. Chapter 4, "The University Experience," is the first of two data chapters. In it I focus exclusively on the experiences of the students during six weeks of coursework and identify and describe those elements of classroom life which took on significant meaning for the participants. In Chapter 5, "The School Experience," the eight week practicum is described and, as in Chapter 4, elements of the experience which assumed prominence are identified and described. Chapter 6, "Discussion, Conclusions, Future Considerations: Ways of Viewing the Experience," provides a discussion of the issues and concerns identified in the previous two chapters and conclusions and future considerations which follow from them. In the last chapter, "Looking Back," I provide a brief account of my thoughts on the research experience.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY: A LOGIC OF JUSTIFICATION

Theoretical Foundations

Introduction

Method is much more than a set of procedures for carrying out a research project. Any plan for conducting research carries with it a set of assumptions about the nature of the phenomena under investigation (ontological assumptions) and how they might best be studied (epistemological assumptions). These assumptions betray how researchers understand the world and influence how they go about doing what they do. Smith and Heshusius (1986:8) refer to this as a "logic of justification," and I have adopted this designation as a subtitle for this chapter to indicate that I intend not only to describe what I have done, but to justify it on the basis of assumptions I have made about the social world.

In very general terms, I have adopted an idealist position. By this I mean that instead of assuming the existence of a social world external to the individual (a realist perspective), I have assumed that such a world is constructed by individuals through everyday social interaction. The central thrust of this position is that social reality is an interpreted phenomenon, that meaning is ascribed to something on the basis of how an individual makes sense of it. Having adopted this perspective, my primary interest in this study was in gaining some degree of understanding about the way education students interpret their circumstances and subsequently structure their realities.

The particular perspective on symbolic interactionism which I have adopted as a framework is consistent with an idealist orientation, and from this perspective follow certain implications for appropriate ways of investigating the social world.

The Methodological Implications of Symbolic Interactionism

Within symbolic interactionism two principal schools of thought have developed polar perspectives on the way in which research into human behaviour should be conducted. The so-called Iowa School, led by the writings of Manford Kuhn, adopt a quantitative orientation to research methods, apparently in an attempt to demonstrate that the somewhat nebulous concepts of symbolic interactionism can be operationalized and studied in a "scientific" manner (Kuhn, 1964; Meltzer and Petras, 1970).

Herbert Blumer, on the other hand, advocates an interpretive approach to methodology. Representing the so-called Chicago School, he considers that to detach oneself from the interaction process is to miss the crucial interpretive stage. He states (Blumer, 1967a:146):

> To try to catch the interpretive process by remaining aloof as a so-called "objective" observer and refusing to take the role of the acting unit is to risk the worst kind of subjectivism - the objective observer is likely to fill in the process of interpretation with his own surmises in place of catching the process as it occurs in the experience of the acting unit which

uses it.

His basic premise is that human interaction, in all its complexity, must be studied as it occurs in the natural setting; that any attempt to reduce it to a simplistic form by studying quantifiable units of overt behaviour is grossly inadequate (Blumer, 1980:417-419). In an article describing a phenomenological symbolic interaction - interpretive interactionism - Denzin (1983:133) captures the essence of this methodological stance and, in so doing, betrays its idealist roots:

> ... meaningful interpretations of human experience can only come from those persons who have thoroughly immersed themselves in the phenomenon they wish to interpret and understand.

Following logically from this, Blumer (1967b:93) notes that the techniques employed in a social inquiry must be such that they allow the researcher to become intimately familiar with the ongoing experiences of the individuals under study and the settings in which they interact. This perspective led me to employ the investigative techniques of participant observation in order to carry out my research plan.

Participant Observation

I define participant observation in a manner concordant with Denzin (1978:183) to refer to a combination of interviewing, document analysis, introspection and direct participation and observation. The extent to which a researcher is a participant observer is related to the degree of involvement he or she has with the informants and activities in the study. Spradley (1980:58-62) identifies and describes five levels of participation ranging from a high degree of involvement to nonparticipation. Nonparticipation is restricted to *observation.* The researcher, in this case, has no involvement with either the subjects or the activities being observed. The lowest level of involvement is *passive*, where the researcher is present on site but has very limited contact with the participants. The next stage, *moderate* participation, describes a level of involvement which borders on being what Spradley (1980:60) terms an "insider." In other words, the researcher has a significant degree of involvement with the people and activities at the research site, but stops short of achieving the status of a "regular." The next level of involvement, *active* participation, refers to the situation where a researcher attempts to become involved with the people and activities he or she is studying to the fullest possible extent. The last stage, *complete* participation, refers to the situation where a researcher begins to systematically study a situation in which he or she is already an ordinary participant. This is the most difficult level of participant observation for, as Spradley (1980:61) points out, it is very hard to study a situation that one already knows well as a participant.

With the exception of the two extremes, complete participation and nonparticipation, my role as a researcher varied through the other three stages depending upon the circumstances present at the time. No one stage accurately depicts my role during the fieldwork phase of this study. Later in this chapter, in a section titled "Data Collection," I describe and defend my varying approaches to participant observation.

As a means of data collection, participant observation immerses the researcher in the everyday life of the individuals and events under study. This enables the researcher the opportunity to develop solid field relationships crucial to the success of the study (Whyte, 1979:65) and to be present as experience unfolds and the participants talk about and react to the elements which constitute their social world. The need to focus on what the partcipants say, how they say it, and the context in which it is said cannot be understated. For it is here where an understanding of the meaning which people attach to events is found. Taylor (1982:300-301), inferring the importance of language, states:

> ... my choice of words may display a certain stance towards the subject matter, e.g., one of detached interest, or one of passionate involvement, or one of ironic affection, or one of cynical schadenfreude.

But an understanding of the nuances of a language, or the specialized vocabulary which may characterize a particular endeavour, demands a familiarity which is likely to elude an outsider. Again, Taylor (1982:317) points out:

> ... it is plainly impossible to learn a language as a detached observer. To understand a language you need to understand the social life and outlook of those who speak it.

Participant observation affords a researcher the opportunity to acquire such an understanding.

As part of participant observation, valuable data can be obtained through self-observation (Kaplan, 1964:141; Spradley, 1980:57-58). By undergoing the same experience as the partcipants a researcher can use the insights derived from this experience to provide a knowledgeful base from which to precipitate discussion. Questions can then move from a "What did you do today?" orientation, which leaves the researcher at the mercy of the individual's ability (or desire) to recall events, to a "What did you think about...?" orientation. This is a mode of informal interviewing for which Craig (1984:29) uses the term "stream-of-consciousness."

Validity

In a general sense, validity refers to the accuracy of the data presented in a research study. But depending upon the ontological and epistemological orientation of the researcher, validity is conceptualized in different ways (MacKinnon et al., 1987).

Much debate in educational research, and in social science research generally, has focused on the suitability of applying investigative techniques employed in the natural sciences to inquiries of a social nature. Terms like "positivism," "interpretive sociology," "phenomenology," "hermeneutics" and "critical theory," to name a few, have been introduced through this debate and have become part of the contemporary lexicon of social research. I don't intend to explore each of these in detail in this work, but a very general differentiation between two of the dominant frameworks is necessary in order to understand that a concept like validity does not have a standard meaning.

The dominant research orientation during much of this century in North America has been positivistic, a term derived from Auguste Compte's "positive philosophy." As with so many of the "buzz words" of social research, it has been used so diversely that it now lacks a standard meaning. It's central thrust, however, has been three-fold (Giddens, 1974:3-4): first, that the methods of the natural sciences can be justifiably applied to the social world; secondly, that investigative outcomes may be construed as "laws" or generalizations of a "law-like" nature; and, thirdly, that the results of inquiries of a social nature carry no logically inherent policy implications. The impact of this position on social research conducted on this continent is revealed by Keat and Urry (1982:90):

> From the 1930s to the 1960s American social science has been largely positivist. Its predominant concerns have been the establishment of general laws of social life from which empirically testable consequences can be derived; operationalizing concepts such that they refer to the observable and especially to the measurable; and the statistical manipulation of naively collected and organized empirical data.

In essence, researchers adopting this stance have accepted the existence of a social world external to, and independent of, the individual. The validity of research findings hinges very strongly on whether or not the researcher has followed acceptable methodological procedures.

Others have challenged this view. As MacKinnon et al. (1987:9) point out, researchers adopting an idealist stance shifted their attention away "from the investigation of an objectively real social world to an interest in understanding how individuals interpret the social world in which they participate." Understanding, specifically an interpretive or empathetic understanding ("verstehen"), served as a unifying element for these researchers (Giddens, 1977:135). Not surprisingly, then, the validity or accuracy of research data hinges on their "adequacy." That is, the descriptions provided by the researcher must be acceptable and make sense to the individuals who have participated as research subjects.

Many writers have attempted to take this general orientation to the assessment of validity and explain how it actually applies when conducting fieldwork. Some, like LeCompte and Goetz (1982), have placed an over-reliance on method and, in this sense, have attempted to meld the interpretive conception of validity with the more positivistic view. They have, however, accurately stated that the credibility of the data lies in determining whether categories created in data analysis are shared in meaning between the researcher and the participants (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982:44). Also, they consider that the amount of time a researcher spends in the field greatly enhances the trustworthiness of the findings. Unfortunately, this offers a great temptation to then rely on time as a major criterion of validity while overlooking the possibility that the researcher who spends twelve months with a group of individuals might not necessarily tell a more credible story than the researcher who confines his or her study to a six month period. The purpose of a prolonged field engagement is to allow for the development of trusting relationships between researcher and subjects so that the participants will be willing to share their thoughts and feelings about their circumstances.

This discussion about the correspondence between the researcher's view of what he or she is studying and the participant's view of what he or she is experiencing pertains to internal validity. External validity, on the other hand, refers to whether or not the findings of the study can be generalized to other similar settings. While obviously dependent upon the credibility of the data, the question frequently raised in human behaviour studies is whether generalizability is possible given the context-specific nature of social interaction. Such a notion is problematic in social theory, although Cusick (1973:5) has speculated that what is reasonable behaviour for individuals in one situation is reasonable for others in similar situations. The problem with this assertion is that it focuses solely on the immediate context and overlooks the individual histories which have preceeded it. Nevertheless, the onus is on researchers conducting interpretive studies to provide an in-depth description of people, circumstances and settings in order to allow for a discussion of transferability to other settings equally well described. This has commonly come to be known as "thick description" (Geertz, 1973).

Reliability

Reliability refers to the replicability of a research project and, like validity, has an internal and external component (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982:41,37). Reliability also lacks a standard meaning, for the way it is conceived in measurement theory varies with its application to interpretive studies. Once again, the ontological and epistemological assumptions which researchers bring to their investigations influences the way this concept is addressed.

Bailey (1982:75) points out that in a test-retest situation reliability refers to the "consistency of scores of a single measure." This is most commonly "assured" by the repeated application of a test instrument in similar settings on the same measure. Since, in an interpretive study, the researcher is the instrument, as it were, reliability is addressed by focusing carefully on the role and activities of the researcher. The question thus switches from one of "Were consistent readings found in other situations?," to "Would other researchers in similar settings be able to reconstruct the original study?" While presenting obvious difficulties, given the context-specific nature of social interaction, it falls to the researcher to provide a thick description of his or her activities and decision making. LeCompte and Goetz (1982:37) suggest that this requires a focus on five problem areas: researcher status position, informant choices, social situations and conditions, premises and analytic constructs, and procedures of data collection and analysis.

Internal reliability refers to inter-rater or inter-observer reliability. That is, would others observing similar circumstances during the same period of time provide similar ratings or findings? With interpretive research, the most common method of addressing this issue is through the retention of virtually all documents, notes, interpretations and comments which make up the research mosiac, a process which Lincoln and Guba (1985:319) label an "audit trail." Owens (1982:13) emphasizes that this concept is all-inclusive and urges researchers to retain the following: raw notes, edited summary notes, records of meetings related to the research, all documents constituting data sources, the specification of data analysis procedures, the rationale for category development in the data analysis, interview guidelines and completed documents.

Doing the Research

Gaining Access

When I first conceived the study, I decided that since I had received my formal preparation as a secondary school teacher, I should attempt to minimize my biases by focusing on preservice elementary education students. I also decided that I would need to identify some group of education students who moved from class to class as a group. I had not, however, at that point narrowed my focus to early childhood.

In early discussions with various individuals, I developed an appreciation for the fact that having a researcher in one's classroom for an entire term was not something that every university instructor relished. Even though I intended to stress that my focus was non-evaluative, I understood that having someone there who was closely observing all activities and who was regularly interacting with class members could be disconcerting for many instructors. Consequently, an Early Childhood instructor ("Dr. Mullen") was recommended to me as someone who might be receptive to my purposes.

During our first meeting her enthusiasm quickly became apparent. She urged me to consider doing the study with a group of third year elementary education students who were minoring in early childhood. Her receptiveness was unexpected and I virtually fell into her offer. Some time later I began to wonder *why* she was so eager to have me in her classroom, but through subsequent meetings it became apparent to me that she was truly interested in understanding the students' perspectives on early childhood teacher preparation. [Throughout the entire fieldwork phase, and to the point of this writing, her interest in the study never overtly waned, a fact that served as a continual source of inspiration for me.] This was the first step in gaining entry to the Elementary Division of Highlands University, and it is arguably the most important.

Having secured the informal approval and direct involvement of a university instructor, the most appropriate next step was to secure the formal approval of the Division Chairperson.

The first meeting with the Chairperson lasted for approximately twenty minutes, during which time I outlined my ideas for the study and told her that I had already discussed it with Dr. Mullen. While she was very pleasant, she cautioned that negotiating entry during the first term of the upcoming year might be difficult due to a general faculty uneasiness over large class sizes. On the other hand, she felt that Dr. Mullen's receptiveness was a positive sign. As I was about to leave her office, she said something that brought the entry process into clearer focus for me. Without recounting her comments verbatim, it was readily apparent that this meeting had been an assessment of *me*, not my proposal. Given that my study was not radical in the extreme or blatantly unethical, she inferred that the same study in the hands of two different people could have substantially different outcomes. In my case, the Chairperson conveyed the message that she felt I would conduct the study in an ethical and professional manner, so that there would be no negative repercussions for the Division. I can only speculate that had she concluded differently, the proposal would have gone no further.

Two months passed before I spoke with the Chairperson again. As I had heard nothing since our first meeting, I was becoming apprehensive about whether the study would receive official sanction. When we did meet, she told me that as long as the study was acceptable to Dr. Mullen, it would receive her support. I took this to be official approval, although nothing was ever put in writing. She did request that I provide her with a brief outline of the study so that she might have it on file. I did this, and also had it approved by Dr. Mullen.

This entire process of gaining access had taken approximately half a year.

Prior to the commencement of the practicum, I undertook the process of gaining access to the schools where the Early Childhood students were placed. Knowing this would take some time, I began the process long before I had decided which of the Early Childhood students would become key informants.

I first approached those individuals at Highlands University who were responsible for overseeing student teacher placements. They requested that I fill out a research application form in which I was to indicate the following: the purpose of the research, the procedures I would employ in the schools, the particular student teachers in whom I was interested, how frequently I would be visiting each school, ethical considerations I had employed in the design and conduct of the study, possible value the study might have for the cooperating organization (school district), and the specific personnel and schools I would be visiting. These forms were sent to the appropriate personnel in each of the school districts for approval.

Once I'd received formal approval from the districts, I wrote to each of the principals in the schools I might be visiting outlining my project and requesting permission to visit the schools on a weekly basis. All of the principals were contacted because I didn't know at this stage which of the students would become key informants. In most cases I received confirmation either by letter or by telephone.

Meeting the Students

Dr. Mullen and I decided that the best time to conduct the study would be during the second term of the third year of preservice preparation. The third year is their "professional year," i.e., the time during which they do the bulk of their student teaching. The practicum during the second term of the third year is a "preferred" one. That is, the one during which they are placed at the early childhood level (K-3; mostly kindergarten).

Since I wanted to join them in January, Dr. Mullen arranged for me to meet them early in October. Dr. Mullen had not taught them to this point, but since she would be doing so in January, she sent a note to them early in the academic year requesting a meeting to discuss class business. In the note she alluded to me, indicating that there was someone she wanted them to meet.

On the day of the scheduled meeting, most of the early childhood students were able to attend. Dr. Mullen began the session by restating what had been in the letter: that she wished to talk about the upcoming term and introduce me. Everyone, of course, looked in my direction and I managed a weak smile. She asked each student to introduce himself or herself (all but two were female) and to say a few words about their summer activities.

When my turn arrived I was very nervous. All of my rehearsals for this day were in vain, for what I said just "came out." I began by telling them about my background, what I was currently doing, and about the nature of the study I wanted to undertake. I requested their permission to join their class in January, and I was relieved to find that there were no objections. At this point Dr. Mullen interjected, stating her support for the study and why she felt it was important. Many of the students nodded, apparently agreeing that the project was worthwhile. One young woman asked why I had selected early childhood. Another wonder aloud whether I would "...tell [Dr. Mullen] things we say about her in class?" We all laughed, but I was quick to point out that all information would be treated in a confidential manner. I also told them that the writing of the dissertation would involve the need for numerous verbatim accounts, but that names would be changed and these statements would be checked with the speakers to ensure accuracy. While this seemed to satisfy them, the question cut to the core of the anonymity issue with its inherent assumption of potential reprisal.

I asked the students if they would be willing to meet with me (without Dr. Mullen) at some subsequent date. Arranging this meeting proved, initially, quite difficult, not because we couldn't find a mutually convenient date, but because I had trouble gathering the courage to make the telephone calls which would initiate contact. I decided to start calling on a Monday in late October, but procrastinated until Wednesday.

As it turned out, the first call raised an interesting issue. I've included the excerpt from my journal made immediately after the call was completed:

> Called [Anise] first and, wouldn't you know it, had an unexpected experience. I had not anticipated anyone answering the phone other than the person with whom I wished to speak. In this case, [Anise] was not at home, but her mother (?) was and asked who was calling. I stumbled as I didn't quite know what to say. I muttered that I was a doctoral student at the University of Alberta and had sat in on an Early Childhood class at Highlands University and wanted to talk with [Anise] on matters pertaining to that. She seemed to accept the explanation but I had visions of her wondering just who this pervert was. Said I'd call tomorrow.

The point is that my identity was queried by a nonparticipant and I didn't know how to respond. There are no definite answers to problem situations such as this, but I'm convinced that the best course is honesty. By this I mean honesty in every aspect of the research process. [At no time did I ever intentionally deceive any member of the study unless I was placed in a position of having to protect someone's identity.]

I was eventually able to arrange the second meeting and I asked the students, who had had time by now to digest what I had told them during our first meeting, whether they had any questions or concerns. No one spoke, but all seemed receptive in a rather bland way. I informed them that I would like to interview each one individually before the end of the term in order to gather background data. [As it turned out, the interviews didn't start until after the term had ended and they proceeded well into the second term. Three students out of the class of twenty-seven were never interviewed.]

I joined the Early Childhood students for their first class of the second term a little over a year after I had first conceived of the study

Data Collection

The Structure of the Fieldwork. The fieldwork portion of this study was divided into three distinctive phases. The first phase involved initial, semi-structured interviews that I conducted with most of the students in the class (Appendix 1). These were undertaken in order to gather basic demographic data and to learn a little bit about their early school years and why they had chosen to become teachers. In addition, I wanted to acquire some early insight into how they felt about their university program.

My original intention had been to interview all of the students before the second term began so that these data would be collected before I began the arduous process of taking daily fieldnotes. While much of the information gained through these interviews could more easily have been gathered by a short questionnaire survey, I felt that the personal interaction would assist in developing closer relationships between myself and the students. As it turned out, the logistics of scheduling interviews with twenty-seven people forced me to conduct many of them well into the second term, when I was already a participating member of the Early Childhood class. And as I mentioned previously, three students were never interviewed.

Much of the information acquired through these interviews was never used. Early in the planning stages of the study I realized that I would need to narrow my focus to a few individuals as the fieldwork progressed in order to gain a greater depth of understanding of the world of preservice teacher education than was feasible by interacting regularly with all twenty-seven students. At this early stage, however, I had no idea who the informants would be. Consequently, the only data used from these initial interviews were those of the six key informants, once I had identified them.

The second phase of the fieldwork related to the six weeks of university coursework. During this time I attended almost all of the classes with the Early Childhood students. This included two classes a week in Educational Administration ("EdAdmin;" three hours per class), and four classes in Early Childhood (two "regular" classes of up to three hours each and two "labs," also three hours each in length, although the students were free to leave as they wished).

When I entered the room for the first Early Childhood class I selected an empty seat in a far corner of the room. From this position I was able to survey the entire room and I was also able to take fieldnotes without attracting much attention. But this position had consequences which I hadn't considered. I was seated with Holly, Janet and Edith, three young women whom I quickly learned constituted a primary group within the room. Like all the rest of the students, I remained in the same seat throughout the entire term. I could have switched positions regularly, but not without attracting attention. Furthermore, remaining in one place afforded me the opportunity to develop closer relationships with these three women, and some others who were seated nearby (Anise, Melinda, Nancy and Gwen). Janet, Holly and Melinda eventually became key informants during the fieldwork. Anise and Gwen became secondary informants during the practicum.

The same situation occurred in EdAdmin. On the first day of classes I positioned myself at the centre back of the room in order to observe everyone. I was seated with Leger, Margo and Dana. Leger and Margo later served as key informants while Dana became a secondary informant.

Approximately two weeks into the classes I began meeting with two key informants ("Holly" and "Janet") every week in order to explore classroom experiences in greater depth and thus enrich the data I was gathering. I have referred to these meetings as "Conversations" in chapters 4 and 5. [I have described in greater detail the selection of informants in the next section.]

The third phase of the fieldwork took place during the eight week practicum. It was readily obvious to me that I couldn't visit a large number of students while they were student teaching and still hope to acquire any significant depth of understanding of the experience. Consequently, I selected four key informants ("Leger," "Margo," "Becky," and "Melinda") each of whom I visited once a week, and spoke with (interviewed) on the telephone regularly. In addition to this I maintained weekly telephone contact with six secondary informants ("Anise," "Dana," "Cathy," "Mardi," "Jill," and "Gwen") and used the data supplied by them to supplement that provided by the key informants. I also continued to hold Conversations with Holly and Janet, although during the practicum we usually only met every second weekend.

In summary, the fieldwork was structured into three distinctive phases. The first involved personal interviews with the majority of the Early Childhood students. The second related to my daily participation in university classes for the first six weeks of the academic term. The third phase occurred during the eight week practicum which closed the term, during which time I regularly visited and interviewed four key informants, and interviewed six secondary informants every week.

Selection of Informants. Perhaps the single most important task facing a participant observer is the development of trusting relationships. Lincoln and Guba (1985:256) assert that "while no one would argue that the existence of trust will automatically lead to credible data, the inverse seems indubitable." Whyte (1979:65) shares this view, noting that what people tell researchers in interviews will be influenced less by technical interviewing skills and more by how they feel about the researcher.

I begin this section on the selection of informants in this manner as I feel that the existence of trusting relationships was one of the most important factors in determining who I approached to become key informants. I was ever sensitive to cues of various sorts which hinted that certain individuals were willing to share their views with me in an open and honest way. While relationships of this sort will develop more quickly with some than with others, it seems logical that a reasonable (an ambiguous term) amount of time is required in order to allow this sort of rapport to evolve. Thus, my choice of seat location in both classes had a bearing on the development of relationships with the Early Childhood students.

Given the purpose of this study, there seemed no rational reason why I should select any one student in the class over any other to become a key informant. All were exposed to similar experiences and, assuming they were willing to share they feelings, could provide the sort of detailed information I was seeking. Consequently, since I had associated most frequently with Holly and Janet during the first two weeks of classes, and since they seemed quite open in my presence, I approached them to ask if they would agree to meet with me on a weekly basis, after class, to further explore their thoughts and feelings about class activities. They both agreed, and we met for a total of six

Conversations during the term. [While I realized that two weeks was little time in which to build a relationship with anyone, I was forced to move quickly as a result of the contracted six week term.]

As the practicum approached, I began designing an interview-observation "model" which would allow me to collect data from as many students as possible without "spreading myself too thin."

I decided to focus primarily on four students: Leger, Margo, Melinda and Becky. The number four was selected as much for convenience as for any other reason. I felt that I could visit one informant each day and leave one day of the week open in case there were others who expected a visit from me, or to use for documentation and analysis. [Some students made it unobtrusively known that they wanted me to visit them at least once during the practicum. While I don't think anyone would have been angry had I not shown up, I made every attempt to have at least one on-site visit. In two cases, this involved a day-long trip to rural areas of the province.]

Two factors influenced who would become a key informant. The first involved the nature of our relationship. I wanted individuals with whom I related easily, and who would be willing to accommodate weekly visits during their practicum.

The second reason was related to the nature of their placement. Much of the emphasis during the Early Childhood class had been placed on the structuring of appropriate learning environments for young children. The principle thrust of the course was that relatively unstructured, child-directed activities were more suitable than structured, teacher-directed ones. Yet, not all of the students were placed in unstructured settings. Consequently, I attempted to select individuals who were placed in classrooms which ranged from relatively unstructured (Becky) to more traditional (Melinda). I wanted to see how these students coped with their settings in light of their Early Childhood instruction.

In addition to the four key informants, I selected six students to serve as secondary informants in order to supplement the data I was gathering. Rapport was the main consideration influencing these choices. I intentionally chose individuals with whom I felt I could talk easily, and who seemed interested in participating more fully in the study. I interviewed each secondary informant once a week over the telephone, and recorded the conversation. In two instances, Anise and Dana, I made an on-site visit.

Lastly, I continued to meet with Janet and Holly throughout the practicum, but less frequently than before.

Role and Conduct of the Researcher. I earlier described Spradley's levels of participant observation and noted that my role as a researcher varied depending upon the context. A researcher's role is negotiated during the actual conduct of the fieldwork and cannot (or, at least, should not) be structured beforehand.

During university classes I decided that I would participate as much as possible in class discussions, but that I would not do the compulsory assignments or write tests on the coursework. The decision to avoid assignments and tests was primarily based on time availability. While I wanted to gain a sense for what class life was like, I didn't feel that I could do justice to my daily fieldnotes and journal entries if I was also trying to meet course requirements. This turned out to be a wise choice, for notetaking consumed the majority of my time once I left the field each day.

Each day I came to class armed with my fieldbook. As the students regularly took notes, I was able to do so without appearing out of place. But everyone knew what I was doing, and every once in a while someone would lean my way and whisper: "You better note this."

Frequently I was unable to record events as they occurred. When we were embroiled in group discussions, or when I was actively engaged in a project with a group of students, I made every attempt to memorize conversations. When the first opportunity arose, I would retreat to a quiet area and jot down key words in my fieldbook, to be expanded in my notebook later.

During classes my level of involvement usually varied between moderate and active. However, as the days passed and I developed closer relationships with some of the students, I had to guard against over-involvement. That is, I had to be cautious that my immersion in the field setting didn't cause me to lose sight of my research purposes. Such a condition is frequently referred to as "going native" (Gold, 1958:220) or "over-rapport" (Miller, 1969:87). Every day after I left the field I would replay the day's events in my mind and assess my conduct as a researcher. In this sense I was intentionally trying to "stand back" and evaluate my behaviour. In addition to this, I regularly discussed my changing role and the decisions I had made with a colleague (who was also engaged in field research) and asked her to critique my journals.

During the practicum my role changed somewhat. While visiting the majority of the key informants I spent most of the class time observing. This wasn't true when I dropped in on Margo. She wanted me to be actively involved with the children, especially during teacher-directed time. I'd frequently sit with them in a circle on the rug and read stories, or sing and dance about as the occasion dictated.

I always arranged to visit the key informants during lunch break. In hindsight, I feel that the time spent talking with them in a quiet place was far more valuable than the hours spend observing them in action with the children. It was during these times that all of them would share their feelings about the student teacher experience with me. These data were invaluable for, as I point out later in this work, had I merely observed overt classroom behaviour and imposed my own interpretation on the actions of these student teachers, I would have left the field with a false picture of the experience.

During my visits, I always carried a small cassette tape recorder with a microphone. In fact, it became a valuable tool during the practicum. I intentionally purchased the smallest cassette recorder available so that I could insert it in the inside breast pocket of my sports jacket. The microphone was clipped to my shirt in such a way that it was hidden by my tie. Everyone knew it was there. I never taped anyone without first asking them if I could do so. But by carrying the tape recorder and microphone on my person I was able to move about with the informants and record conversations almost regardless of the circumstances. [I recorded one conversation with Melinda while she was on playground supervision and we were wandering about the school yard. Another, with Leger, was taped while we ate lunch at a crowded McDonald's restaurant.]

In addition to this, I used the tape recorder as a substitute for my fieldbook. When I wanted to record events or make personal comments about things that had happened I would slip away to someplace quiet (my car, a washroom, an empty classroom) and record my thoughts.

The tape recorder had a further use. Each evening after an observation I would call the informant and explore the day's experiences in greater detail than had been possible at the school. All of these calls were taped with permission. I'd set the tape recorder on my desk, use scotch tape to secure the microphone to the earpiece, and record the conversation. This worked remarkably well, and allowed me to listen carefully to each conversation without having to hastily scribble notes.

School visits usually lasted about two or three hours. I was particularly sensitive to the fact that students teachers are under constant scrutiny. Thus, I didn't want to stay for the entire day and, frankly, couldn't see the value in extended observation. Instead, as I related earlier, I would take half an hour or forty-five minutes at lunch time to explore the weeks' events, then I would join the class for part of the afternoon session to gain a sense of how they conducted themselves with the children. At other times during the day, when I might otherwise have been observing, I would listen to the tapes and note central issues and concerns.

I was always aware that my presence, whether during university classes or while in an elementary classroom, could have an effect on the situation. Interestingly, many of the informants commented that my visits forced them to become more self-reflective, to more critically assess their behaviour as student teachers. Everyone who mentioned this viewed it positively. Undoubtedly there were other ways in which my presence influenced situations. However, lest this be construed negatively, many writers feel that prolonged engagement is one of the strengths of participant observation research. While I only spent one academic term with the Early Childhood students, I never sensed that any of the informants tried to deceive me when recounting their experiences. In fact, quite the opposite.

Data Sources. A participant observation study usually draws its data from four sources: interviews, observation, relevant documents and introspection on behalf of the researcher.

The interviews I conducted were frequently casual conversations and in that sense may be defined as informal (Gorden,1980:221). In fact, I rarely referred to interviews as such, preferring instead to talk about "conversations" or "chats." These conversations were usually semi-structured and I would, at some point while we were talking, ask standard questions. For instance, I'd always asked the informants to recount experiences they considered to be very positive, and those they labelled particularly negative. Usually our conversations began: "How did things go this week?" Such a beginning frequently "opened the flood gates" about their recent experiences and I became an avid listener who only occasionally asked questions in order to probe deeper or provide helpful prods.

The initial interviews I referred to earlier were more structured. I wanted to gather data of a certain type, so I asked questions which served my purposes. But even here, the questions were frequently open-ended and, depending on the responses of the interviewees, we occasionally ended up exploring issues I hadn't foreseen.

The majority of these conversations were either recorded on tape or noted in my fieldbook at the first available opportunity. I did not transcribe many of these sessions; I preferred instead to listen to the tapes later and take notes then. The subsequent data analysis was based largely on these notes.

Many weeks after the practicum ended, three of the four key informants met with me in a group setting (Becky was unable to attend) to discuss, with each other, their experiences. To this point I had not revealed anyone's identity to anyone else, but I felt that this would provide a useful forum for discussion. This session lasted almost three hours and was recorded on cassette tape.

My observation of activites also served a useful purpose. Since I participated in their experiences to varying degrees, I was able to use my personal thoughts and observations to facilitate stimulated recall on behalf of the participants. Questions such as: "What were you thinking when you did (or said) this?," or "How did you feel when one of the boys called you a stupid bitch (an actual occurrence!)?," served to jog memories and initiate discussion.

In addition to this, my presence on-site allowed me to provide a physical description of each student's situation in order to more fully depict the context in which their experiences unfolded.

[Although distinctive methods, interviewing and observation in this type of study are best understood in tandem, as "classic participant observation ... always involves the interweaving of looking and listening, of watching and asking..." (Lofland and Lofland, 1984:13).]

A variety of documents also served as useful sources of data. These included the following:

1. Official documents from Highlands University pertaining to the baccalaureate program in elementary education.
2. Handouts provided in both the Early Childhood and Educational Administration courses.
3. Logs maintained in Early Childhood by the students, in which they were expected to record and comment upon their activities.
4. Logs which each of the students kept during the practicum, again relating to their experiences.
5. Personal information sheets which each of the students filled out at the beginning of the Early Childhood course.
6. Evaluations done by the students of their course in Early Childhood.

All of these documents proved to be valuable sources of data, although I exercised a great deal of caution when drawing from the logs or the course evaluations.

The logs kept during the Early Childhood course were read by the Early Childhood instructor so she might gain some sense of how the students were progressing and coping with the course requirements. Consequently, and not surprisingly, many of them tended to say only the sorts of things which they felt would reflect positively on them. I recall reading comments that some students made about books they had "read" at one of the learning centres, knowing full well that they hadn't really read them at all, but were merely trying to give the impression that they had at least done some "serious browsing." However, some students used the logs as a means of letting Dr. Mullen know when they were experiencing particular difficulty with some activity or concept. Since I had no way of assessing the validity of the content of their logs, I tended to draw on them only when they corroborated what I was seeing in class and hearing from the students.

The same was true of the logs they maintained during student teaching. In some cases, these documents were read by the cooperating teacher and/or the faculty consultant. One of the informants told me quite bluntly that since her consultant was reviewing her logs she only recorded those things that she (the consultant) wanted to read. She said that if I wanted to use them, she would go through them with me to let me know what was "shit" and what was not. Another key informant allowed her faculty consultant to read her logs, but withheld them from her cooperating teacher. In my opinion, she was quite forthright in her entries as she had a relationship with her consultant where she felt free to do so. One of the other informants also withheld his logs from his cooperating teacher and was aghast late in the term when he thought she was going to ask to see them.

As I got to know the key informants well and evolved an appreciation of their circumstances I developed a sense for the degree of reliability I could place in their log entries. While I rarely hesitated to draw from one informant's, another's might be viewed cautiously. Some expressed themselves quite freely in their logs, while others offered very little in the way of personal thoughts. [One of the key informants tended to confine herself to a daily description of her activities.]

Another source of data were my own thoughts and feelings (introspective data) about the activities of the term. Given my role as a researcher and my experience as a classroom teacher, I would be fooling no one if I claimed to be like any other student in the class. But I was there, and I did take part in numerous activities and discussions, and my thoughts about these experiences also constituted data. While I have obviously drawn less from this source than from the Early Childhood students, my observations and comments are scattered throughout this document.

Data Analysis

The general orientation which I adopted towards data analysis follows from a conceptualization of research as more of a cognitive undertaking and less of a validation process. Bailyn (1977:97) points out that this implies data analysis as an ongoing, continuous activity involving a constant interplay between concepts and data in which the conceptual understanding of the researcher is developmental rather than assumed beforehand. Such an orientation allows ongoing data analysis to guide the inquiry, moving from the initial broad descriptive observations to more focused and selective ones (Spradley, 1980:33; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:150-151).

Research studies of an interpretive[1] nature inevitably result in the accumulation of a substantial body of written material in the form of interview transcripts, observational and introspective notes, analytic insights, and personal and official documents. Handling these data requires the researcher to establish some scheme whereby the information is regularly filed, coded and categorized.

At the time I was developing my proposal to conduct this study, I indicated that I would maintain at least three files: one containing personal and official documentation on each of the participants; a chronological record which retains statements and comments in their original context (Lofland and Lofland, 1984:134-135); and a third file containing analyzed and classified segments of fieldnotes. I did this, but with some modification.

For each of the twenty-seven Early Childhood students I maintained a personal file. As the term progressed and I began to focus on certain students, their files grew more rapidly than the others in the class. Each contained the student information sheet they had provided for Dr. Mullen, copies of the logs they maintained for the duration of the Early Childhood course, copies of their student teaching logs, and, in some cases, copies of the term papers they wrote in Educational Administration. In addition to this, I frequently included notes and scribblings I had made which served as reminders of things to do or questions that needed to be explored with the individual involved.

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[1] Elsewhere in this document I refer to the study as an "interpretive" one. I am using the term loosely to describe a study which has as it basic intent an understanding of "the social world at the level of subjective experience" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:28). Symbolic interactionism is usually described as functionalist because it shares many of the same basic tenets as other social theories of this genre. However, interactionism is a loosely-woven web of diverse perspectives, with "behavioural interactionism" and "phenomenological interactionism" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:79) representing extreme endpoints. The perspective I have adopted shares more in common with the latter and, as such, shows many similarities with more traditional interpretive perspectives of the social world such as phenomenology.

The chronological record I maintained during the time the students were taking the two courses were the expanded notes I wrote each evening based on the brief jottings I made each day in my fieldbook. This was done in prose on looseleaf paper and then inserted into a binder. Each page was dated and numbered. Scattered throughout this document are frequent personal remarks about what I was seeing and hearing, or notes to myself to explore certain things in greater detail. I made a photocopy of the entire document in the event the original was lost or destroyed.

The chronological record I kept during the practicum were the numerous cassette tapes recorded during visits to schools or during telephone conversations with informants. Each tape was dated and a record kept of which informants were recorded on which tapes.

The actual analysis of these data was a task far greater in magnitude than I had ever imagined. I had read numerous accounts by other researchers who had undertaken ethnographic-type projects and all commented on the difficulties in dealing with such a quantity of information. But their accounts were not really meaningful for me until I began to see how much data I was accumulating.

I attacked - and attacked, I think, is the right word - this task by reviewing the suggestions made by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) and Turner (1981). Both offer useful accounts of ways in which large quantities of written material can be put into manageable form. Turner (1981) offers a nine-stage prescription for the manipulation of raw data into refined analysis (the development of "grounded theory") which, although not followed precisely, was useful in the early coding and categorization of the data in this study. But rather than describe each of Turner's stages, I will refer the reader who is interested to his article, and go on with a description of how I dealt with my data. [If one is attempting to be true to the spirit of an interpretive inquiry, it seems to me inappropriate to passively adopt someone else's approach to data analysis. Each researcher's circumstances will vary and the most appropriate way to analyze and develop one's own data will best be decided once the researcher is immersed in that task.]

I decided to deal with the data on the university experience first. This included two principal sources: the binder of expanded writings I had made based on my daily fieldnotes, and the transcripts of the Conversations held prior to the practicum with Holly and Janet. Transcription turned out to be a costly and time-consuming process, so I eventually abandoned it in favor of note-taking based on my own review of the tapes. At this stage, however, I had had the early Conversations transcribed and I handled these data as I did my own notes. This account is presented below in point form:

1. Each looseleaf page of my binder was numbered, as was each paragraph. This was solely for reference and retrieval purposes. Thus, when I later came across a reference to UN 101-36, I knew that it stood for "university notes, page 101, paragraph number 36 on that page."
2. Each paragraph was read and re-read and a label or category given to it which identified its central topic or issue. This category was then written at the top of a large file card and the paragraph reference noted below it. As I proceeded through my notes and came across paragraphs which referred to the same category, I retrieved that card and noted the paragraph on it. Other paragraphs which alluded to different issues would receive

different labels, and these were duly noted on separate file cards. From my notes alone I created a total of sixty-six categories.

3. I then reviewed all of these categories numerous times in an attempted to find links or relationships between them. As a result of this I was able to collapse the sixty-six categories into eleven broad domains or themes (I've actually referred to them as themes in the body of the document). These themes ultimately served to structure the data chapter dealing with the university experience (Chapter 4).

I then took the transcripts from the Conversations with Holly and Janet and began the process anew. At first I was tempted to let the categories I had developed through an analysis of my notes structure the data I had gathered from these two key informants. However, a quick review of the transcripts made me realize this wouldn't work. So I followed the same coding and categorizing procedure I had used with my notes. In all, these transcripts yielded forty-two categories. Without any undue manipulation I was able to fit these categories into the eleven themes.

In addition to the data mentioned above, I incorporated portions of their Early Childhood logs and course evaluations where it seemed appropriate.

The analysis of the data from the practicum experience was handled in a similar manner. Here, however, the data were mostly in the form of informal interviews on cassette tapes. As I related earlier, I initially thought that I would have these tapes transcribed, then code and analyze the transcripts just as I had the data from the university experience. But transcribing was both expensive and time-consuming. The time element was important, for I wanted to listen to all of the tapes from one week before I visited the informants the next week. Consequently, I decided to modify my original ideas on how to deal with these data.

After every visit and follow-up telephone conversation I would listen to the tapes and make notes on the issues and concerns identified by the informants. For everything that I noted on paper I'd record the tape footage so that I could easily find the reference again. Once I had done this for all of the tapes and all of the informants, I coded each entry. As with the previous data, each issue or concern that I'd noted was given a descriptive label or category and entered on a large file card (I used file cards of different colors to distinguish the key informants). Then the coded entry was written below. For example, an entry that was coded B-V2-1-9 was read as "Becky, second visit, page 1, entry number 9 on that page." The whole process was begun anew for each of the key informants. When I had finished I had developed thirty-three categories for Becky, forty-four for Leger, forty-two for Margo, and fifty-nine for Melinda. The data from these informants were, in a manner similar to the data from the university experience, collapsed into eight broad themes. Of these eight, four were major themes (shared by all four key informants) and four were minor themes (shared by two or three of the key informants).

The tapes from the Conversations with Holly and Janet, and those from my telephone interviews with the six secondary informants, were coded and analyzed in a similar way. However, I didn't develop categories and themes from these data, but instead used them to supplement the themes already developed. With a few exceptions, this worked very well.

In addition to the data from the tapes, I analyzed the logs which each of the key informants had kept throughout the practicum. As I mentioned previously, these were used carefully, but I did draw from them where it seemed particularly appropriate.

Summary

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first, entitled "Theoretical Foundations," deals with questions of design and methodology from a theoretical perspective. Here I attempt to justify my plan and actions on the basis of the assumptions I have made about human nature and the best ways to come to some understanding of human experience, and to show how this melds with symbolic interactionism.

In the second section, "Doing the Research," I describe the development of the study including the process of gaining access, meeting the students, and collecting and analyzing the data.

In the next chapter, entitled "The Setting," I provide a description of the program of studies in the Elementary Division of Highlands University with emphasis on the Early Childhood program. In addition, I've included a brief biography of each of the six key informants in the study.

CHAPTER 3

THE SETTING

The University Program

Introduction

Highlands University is located in a moderately-sized Canadian city ("Highlands"). As a large post-secondary institution, the University offers an extensive range of liberal education programs, complemented by a number of "schools" which provide an opportunity for interested and capable students to further their education in a specialized area.

One of these schools, the School of Education, offers two- and four-year baccalaureate degrees with the possibility of study in four general areas: elementary, secondary, industrial arts, and vocational education. Students entering directly from grade 12 and choosing an elementary or secondary orientation enrol in a four-year program in which liberal arts and education courses are integrated. [Less emphasis is placed on non-education courses in the industrial and vocational programs.] Students opting for a two-year program must hold an undergraduate degree acceptable to the School.

The Elementary Division

The general goal of the Elementary Division in the

School of Education is to prepare generalist teachers who are capable of instructing at any elementary grade level, kindergarten to grade 6.

Students entering in their first year are encouraged to selected courses from other faculties at Highlands University. These include English, literature, mathematics, the natural sciences, the social sciences, fine arts, Canadian studies and physical education. The only course taken from the School of Education is a first-level practicum, designed to provide some exposure to nearby schools and to assist the students in determining whether they wish to pursue a career in teaching.

In the second year students normally take additional courses outside of the School of Education, but fewer than in the previous year. In addition, they take a course in educational foundations, one in educational psychology, and an introductory course in curriculum and instruction (their first "methods" course).

The third year is referred to as their "professional year." During this time they concentrate largely on education courses: a senior level methods course, more courses in educational foundations and educational psychology, and one in educational administration. The main reason for designating this as the professional year, however, is the inclusion of two practica.

The first practicum occupies a four week period at the end of the first academic term. This is usually in a non-preferred area, i.e., those interested in early childhood would be placed at upper elementary, and those interested in grades 4 to 6 would likely find themselves teaching at the lower levels.

The second practicum occurs at the end of the second term and lasts for eight weeks. During this time students are placed in their preferred areas and they are expected to assume greater teaching responsibility than had previously been the case. [It was during this term that I joined the students in this study.]

The fourth and final year is intended as a post-teaching experience. The students take senior courses which presumably (and clearly stated in the calendar of the School of Education) have been designed to draw on their practica experiences. Any non-education electives which have not yet been satisfied are also taken at this time.

Students are also required to select a "minor." In a sense, minors designate areas of specialization and are chosen from a variety of options, normally during the fourth year. These include (not all are offered in any given year): Canada studies, community education, education and self knowledge, education through the arts, English as a second language, individual differences and individualization, language arts, learning resources, moral education, movement, music, reading, second languages, visual arts, an intercultural minor, special education, and early childhood. The last three mentioned differ from the others in that they are spread over a longer period of time.

The Early Childhood Minor

The philosophical base upon which the Early Childhood program is structured centres on the malleable nature of young children and the significant influence which key individuals can have on their behaviour and beliefs. In interactionist terminology, these individuals become significant others whose general demeanour is likely to be modelled by the children with whom they have frequent contact. As individuals who spend a substantial portion of their time with young children, early childhood teachers need to be ever cognizant of their behaviour and pronouncements. This is a theme central to the Early Childhood program at Highlands University.

As a minor "specialization," the students are carefully screened by the Early Childhood instructors. The decision to focus on early childhood must be made during the Winter Session of the first year, although coursework does not begin until the following year. Successful applicants, therefore, may be viewed (and frequently view themselves) as forming a reasonably select group within the Elementary Division.

Four courses form the core of the Early Childhood program. The objectives of these courses, taken collectively, are developed around seven thematic categories: the child, personnel, facilities, learning experiences, foundation knowledge, family/home environment, and professional resources.

During the second, third and fourth years the students become involved in a variety of curricular and extracurricular activities which focus on young children. One such activity is the "adopt a family" program. Students become involved with a family having a child in the three- to five-year-old age range, and they are expected to develop relationships which hopefully will last well beyond their preservice preparation. The purpose of the "adopt a family" program is to immerse each student in the world of a young child in the hopes that he or she will develop an understanding of the multitude of factors which constitute a child's reality. The students are expected to draw on these experiences as they progress through the Early Childhood program. [The "adopt a family" program rarely came up in conversation while I was with the students, so it is infrequently *mentioned in this study.* When it was raised, however, it was invariably spoken of in derogatory tones. While most felt it was a good idea in principle, all said that it required far too much time in an already crowded schedule. Those students who were themselves parents felt a great deal of pressure, for not only did they have to care for their own children and engage in full-time studies, they were expected to become involved with someone else's child. Towards the end of the term I asked some of the students why the "adopt a family" program was scarcely ever mentioned. The usual reply was that most were trying very hard to forget it.]

The Key Informants

The short histories which follow are of the key informants only. Their experiences permeate all aspects of this study, far more so than those of the secondary informants. During the time the students were involved in university classes, two individuals served as key informants: Holly and Janet. During the practicum, however, four different key informants were selected: Leger, Margo, Melinda and Becky.

The purpose of these biographies is to provide the reader with basic background information on the main participants. I have exercised a great deal of caution in preparing these accounts, however, for stories such as these always risk revealing the identities of those involved.

Different researchers might give different reasons for including participant biographies. My reason is simple: I believe that the nature of individual experiences and personal interpretations is greatly influenced by who we are and what we have done in the past. Some refer to this as the "baggage" we carry into any situation. However labelled, this information can potentially assist the reader in more fully understanding and appreciating the experiences of the main actors in this study.

Biographical data are based largely on the individual interviews I conducted with the students prior to, and during, the second term of their third academic year. The structure of the accounts which follow is based on the way I had organized the interview questions:

1. Demographic data, included birthplace, parents occupation and education.
2. Memories of their years in elementary and secondary schools.
3. The decision to enter education and to focus on early childhood.
4. Thoughts about the program to the middle of their third year.
5. Thoughts about what they see themselves doing in the near future.

Becky

Becky was born in the early '60s near the city of Highlands. Her father works as a salesman in the city and her mother, while a registered nurse, is employed as a teacher's aide in a daycare. When Becky was 14 the family moved to a rural setting further from the city, but returned a few years later.

Schooling. Becky began school in grade 1 in a rural area outside Highlands city limits. She hated her first year of school intensely. It was a Catholic school and her first teacher was very strict. She remembers running back to her mother after she'd been dropped off at school. Grades 1 through 5 were not particularly memorable, and those memories that remain were not pleasant.

She recalls a grade 4 teacher who disciplined the children by either forcing them under the teacher's desk or by making them stand in a closet. Apparently the teacher wore a wig, and the children used to irritate her by pulling the wig off with a yardstick.

Grade six was a change for the better. She went to a new, open-area school in Highlands where she developed a childhood crush on one of her teachers. To her he was an excellent teacher because he could relate well with the children and didn't talk down to them. [During conversations with other informants this characteristic was frequently mentioned as a "marker" of a "good" teacher.]

Grade 7 was one of her favorite years. She described herself as belonging to the "worst" class in school (the one every teacher dreaded), but all the students loved the homeroom teacher. Once again, this was a person who was able to communicate well with the kids.

At the age of 14 the family moved away from Highlands to a small rural community. Becky began high school there, but she had developed an obsession with weight loss (she describes herself as "anorexic," a problem for which she is still being treated). She subsequently quit high school at the age of 15 and did not return.

For the next few years she was involved in a variety of activities. She attended a nearby college for approximately six months to take business courses and general academic upgrading. She also enrolled in various correspondence courses and always received excellent marks for her efforts. In addition to her academic endeavours, she worked as a shampoo assistant, a secretary, and held a variety of other jobs, most of which she describes as having to do with losing weight.

At the age of 17 she became pregnant, but subsequently gave the baby up for adoption. She later married and returned to a rural setting where she worked as a waitress. It was during this time that she began to consider attending university and becoming a teacher.

The Decision to Become A Teacher. Becky claims that she always wanted to be a teacher. Like so many others, she fondly recalls playing school as a child with her younger brother. But while she always wanted to be a teacher, she spent very little time thinking about it. She assumed that the absence of a high school diploma would prevent her from pursuing this goal. For this reason, she seriously considered becoming a hairdresser or an accountant.

However, Becky learned that she *could* enter university as a mature student and, with the initial support of her husband, did so. Early Childhood was her choice from the very beginning, for she loves young children and enjoys being in their company. But again, she assumed that she was unlikely to be accepted for an Early Childhood minor because her secondary schooling was incomplete. She was overjoyed when she learned she'd been accepted.

Beside providing her with a job, she feels that a baccalaureate degree in education will allow her the opportunity to derive a great deal of personal satisfaction from what she does. As she says: "I have a lot of love to give." Defining herself as a Christian, Becky describes modern society as very "screwed up," and hopes to play her part in helping a few young people realize that there are individuals who truly care about them.

Thoughts on the Program. "I've learned a lot of useless stuff." That was her first reaction to my question on her thoughts about the program to the midpoint of her third year. She said that she quite honestly believes that university programs are structured the way they are to see whether the students can handle stressful situations. She feels it's a weeding-out arrangement.

Like so many of her classmates, Becky describes the electives taken outside the School of Education during the first year as "boring" and "useless." She felt that many of these courses were of questionable value because they seemed to her to have little relevance to the classroom.

When it came to the education courses she had taken, Becky placed a great deal of emphasis on the approach of the instructor. A course was "good" if the instructor was able to make it interesting and relevant to the "real world" of the classroom. A course was "bad" if the instructor was poor. She spoke disparagingly of one course she took in educational psychology. While she felt that the content was excellent, she described the instructor as a "male chauvinist." She recalled one class where he told the students that a woman's I.Q. was related to the size of her breasts (the larger the breasts, the lower the I.Q.). On another occasion he told them that women cry in order to manipulate people, and warned them that if any female came crying to his office looking for a higher mark, he'd put them out.

She described the curriculum and instruction (C and I) courses which she'd taken as most beneficial. Here they received much in the way of "hands on" instruction, and Becky, like other students, felt that this provided them with practical insights into the world of teaching. When she described a C and I course negatively it was usually in some way related to the instructor.

For all of the Early Childhood students, the non-preferred practicum took place during the first term of the third year. Becky describes this as a good experience, although she wasn't particularly enamoured with her cooperating teacher. While they got along reasonably well, she felt that their approaches to teaching clashed. As would later be the case with her preferred placement, she felt a strong sense of conformity (she claimed that her cooperating teacher explicitly told her how to teach). However, she didn't enjoy behaving in a way which was foreign to her personality. Nevertheless, she felt that the four-week experience helped her immeasurably in gaining confidence in herself as a teacher, and decided that she wouldn't mind teaching at upper elementary.

The Future. Becky sees herself as a grade 2 teacher in the foreseeable future, although kindergarten is a possibility (it became her first choice as a result of her eight week preferred placement).

As a teacher she sees herself as someone who should be particularly sensitive to the needs of the children; as someone who can provide the love that so many are lacking.

Holly

Holly was born and raised in the city of Highlands in the mid '60s. Her father is a support staff supervisor at a local hospital and her mother is a housewife.

Schooling. Holly remembers her first year in school as particularly difficult. Like Becky, she didn't attend kindergarten, but started grade 1 at the age of five and feels that her young age contributed to her problems. She remembers her elementary years as good ones, particularly socially (she refers to herself as a class jester). Academically she experienced a great deal of frustration in mathematics, and retains a fear of the subject today.

Unlike some of her classmates, Holly remembers all of her elementary school teachers very well. She can quickly describe the best and the worst and, not surprisingly, considers the best to be the one who exhibited the greatest degree of compassion and understanding for young children (the grade 6 teacher).

In junior high school she experienced numerous problems. Most of these resulted from difficulties that existed at home.

High school was "a bit better." She played the flute in the school band and feels that was a major reason why her last years in school were more enjoyable. Math, however, was still a problem, and even with private tutoring she still found herself becoming very "tense and upset" during math class. Her math teacher, in her opinion, did little to alleviate this fear. One experience in particular is branded in her memory. She was preparing for an upcoming test in math and was in tears as the day neared. Her father called the school counsellor to make him aware of Holly's difficulties. She wrote the test and when it was returned her teacher said to her: "Oh [Holly], you didn't do that bad. You got twenty-eight percent." In Holly's words, "that was crushing." She couldn't believe that a teacher would say that to a student.

At one point in high school she had a math teacher who related well to the students and didn't talk down to them. She said that he helped her "sort of" enjoy the subject.

The Decision to Become a Teacher. Holly clearly remembers the time when she made the choice to become a teacher. It was during her worst year in elementary school - grade 3 - when she had a teacher who she describes as "really mean." She decided that "if I became a teacher, I would not be like her."

Consequently, she never seriously considered another career possibility, although she flirted with the idea of becoming a nurse. She describes herself as someone who gets along very well with children: "I love them, even just looking at them."

From the moment she entered Highlands University it was her intention to focus on young children. She had had some experience dealing with special needs children and considered applying for the Special Education minor. However, friends persuaded her that job opportunities were better for Early Childhood graduates, so she applied there and was accepted. [This was not an uncommon story. Unfortunately, at the time of this writing - over one year later and shortly after Holly's class graduated - I know of only two of the twenty-seven students who have found positions in early childhood, and one of those is at a preschool level.]

Thoughts on the Program. Holly entered teacher education hoping to learn how to be an effective teacher of young children, and to develop an understanding of the development of children at that age. When I asked her how she felt about the Early Childhood program to the middle of her third year, she responded: "I'm *told* it's a really good program." Like most of the other students in the class, she experienced difficulty adjusting to the structural arrangements in the classroom when she took her first Early Childhood course (during her second year). She retains a skepticism about learning centres, but attempts to keep an open mind on the subject. Regardless of its suitability for young children, she questions whether she learned much during that first course. In addition, she was critical of the adopt a family program. She claims that some of the students fabricated accounts to enter in their scrapbooks in order to please the instructor.

On the program in general, Holly echoes the opinion of most of her classmates. She becomes incensed when she enrols in a course and then fails to see its relevance to her immediate needs. She spoke of a philosophy course she started: "I didn't see any sense in it at all, and when I can't see any sense in taking something, I'm not going to sit there because I won't learn." So she dropped the course.

She speaks more positively of the C and I courses. Most she describes as "great," as they provide much in the way of practical information. However, she denigrates courses such as educational foundations for their seeming irrelevance to classroom instruction (although she spoke of the course - history of education - as interesting). She also spoke critically of an educational psychology course, and wondered how anyone could be taught teacher effectiveness training in a class with three hundred other students. In her opinion, the only way to learn to be an effective teacher "is by doing it." Since the instructor spent all class period reading from the text, she attended few classes and read it on her own. In her words,"how do they expect to get quality teachers when we don't get quality education?"

She says that the non-preferred practicum during the third year was a positive experience (grade 4). She related well with her cooperating teacher and added that, as a result of the four weeks of student teaching, she had to think carefully about whether early childhood was really the level at which she wanted to teach.

The practicum was particularly helpful in developing her self-confidence on the issue of classroom control, an area she feared when student teaching began. In her view, problem situations are manageable as long as the teacher remains calm.

The Future. Holly hopes to obtain a teaching position after graduation, although she isn't particularly fussy about the grade level. She adds, however, that if she gets "burned out" as a teacher, she'd like to return to university to pursue either nursing or music.

On her future role, Holly sees herself as a teacher and counsellor combined. She wants to be able to help young children with any problems they may have. And when she talks of this, she adds that she clearly remembers those teachers who helped her when there were family problems in her home.

Janet

Janet was born in Highlands in the mid '60s. Like Holly, she grew up in the city and wants to remain there. Her father works as a special purpose contractor in Highlands and her mother stays at home.

Schooling. Janet doesn't recall a lot from her years in elementary school other than those dramatic events that frequently burn themselves into a person's memory. She vividly remembers being sent to the corner in grade 1. She also recalls having her name removed from the "good citizens" list in grade 2. Apparently this was used as a form of classroom control whereby the "good" pupils had their names put on a list (week by week) to receive special privileges, such as going for a drink of water or being allowed to go to the washroom without requesting. As Janet remembers it, her teacher left the room and told the children to stay seated. Unfortunately, Janet had to leave the room to use the washroom. When the teacher learned of this Janet's name was removed from the list.

Elementary years were generally good years for her. With the exception of one or two teachers whom she disliked (her music teacher once made her sing a solo in front of the class because she thought Janet had been talking) she enjoyed her teachers and developed well socially.

Secondary schooling was also enjoyable, what she terms "fun years." In junior high she met a lot of new children, many of whom still form her nucleus of friends. She fondly recalls a grade 7 teacher, with whom she and a friend used to jog: "He was a friend, he wasn't just a teacher." This positive insight into what a teacher can be has remained with her. She still feels that the ability ro talk with students and to offer friendship are important qualities for a teacher.

The Decision to Become a Teacher. Janet traces her decision to enter teaching back to that same grade 2 teacher who removed her name from the "good citizens" list. This incident aside, she remembers her affectionately.

As Janet remembers it, teaching was something she was planning to do until after she entered high school. There she briefly entertained thoughts of becoming a nurse or a social worker. The motivation behind all these career considerations was that they offered the opportunity to work with people, preferably young children. By grade 12, she had rejected nursing and social work and had decided upon teaching again. When I asked her why she wanted to work with youngsters she responded: "I feel comfortable around kids. I don't always feel comfortable around adults."

Before graduating from high school she seriously considered pursuing early childhood at a reputable community college, but a school counsellor persuaded her that a university degree would provide her with more career flexibility. Janet chuckled when she added that the counsellor didn't tell her that only thirty students were accepted into Early Childhood each year at Highlands University. Fortunately, she became one of them.

Thoughts on the Program. Janet told me that she hoped that the education program would give her "the knowledge to understand kids in order to transmit what I know to them." But when she reflected on the program to the midpoint of her third year, her comments became distinctly derogatory:

> Except for the C.I.s, I really don't think I've learned anything that could help me in teaching. The C.I.s help because they're specifically what-to-teach, how-to-teach. I'm in my third year, I have a year and a half left, and I really feel like I don't know how to teach. I just came off a practicum, so I know that I don't know a lot about what goes on.

Janet was like so many others in her views on the program. Unless the content she was studying was defined by her as particularly relevant to classroom teaching, it was dismissed as superfluous.

Her experience during the non-preferred practicum also helped her realize that the day-to-day realities of teaching are more involved than she had previously thought. It was, however, a rewarding experience for her, especially the daily interaction with young children.

The Future. Janet definitely sees herself as a teacher in the immediate future, although she is more inclined towards grade 2 than kindergarten (perhaps a further influence of the grade 2 teacher she admired?). Eventually, however, she hopes to return to university at the graduate level to focus either on reading or language.

Leger

Leger is the only one of the key informants not born and raised in the Highlands area. He spent his childhood in a neighbouring province where his father farms and his mother is employed outside of the home.

Schooling. Leger's memories of elementary school are good ones. He recalls numerous social experiences with affection, particularly those which took place on the bus while travelling to and from school.

Like Janet, he encountered his favorite teacher in grade 2 and describes her as someone who enjoyed many good times with the children and rarely raised her voice. He also speaks warmly of a grade 6 homeroom teacher who moved with them to junior high for a few years. Leger describes these years as the best in his school career.

At the secondary level Leger found that he had a special talent for art, and that quickly developed into a favorite subject area. In fact he describes it as interfering with his social life, for while others were interested in skipping classes or engaging in out-of-school activities, Leger could be found working in the art room. He said that this started in grade 10, and by the time his class had reached grade 12, Leger was off in his "own little world."

Leger despised math. He sat at the back of the class hoping that the teacher would forget that he was there and not call upon him to do anything that required a knowledge of the subject.

Unlike all of the other key informants, Leger claims to have made the choice to become a teacher approximately two months before he arrived at Highlands University. He says that it had been in the back of his mind for some time, but that the choice between a teaching career or entering fine arts was a difficult one. Ultimately he decided that it would not be easy making a living as an artist (he claims that the average income of a Canadian artist is $6000) unless one is very good, and Leger doesn't see himself as exceptional. He also dallied with thoughts of becoming a lawyer. But teaching became his first choice, although he still marvels at how he ended up in elementary:

> ... it came to the forefront when I finally got here and I got accepted into education. And then I had to decide. I was sitting at the registration desk deciding whether I wanted to take secondary or elementary and for some reason I went to elementary. I don't know why, because I'd always envisioned myself as an art and a social studies teacher in high school. And what I'm doing here I don't know yet. (laughing) I haven't figured it out yet.

He attributes his inclination towards a teaching career to his mother's side of the family. He describes them as very close-knit, and adds that when they visited his cousins he (being the oldest) always assumed the role of play leader. Through childhood and adolescence Leger received much positive reinforcement concerning his relationship with younger children. The mother of the youngsters he baby-sat for seven years frequently told him that she'd never want anyone else minding her children. His parents and grandparents did the same, telling him how happy they were that he was with the kids and how secure they felt in knowing the children would have a good time.

Once he was accepted into the Elementary Division of the School of Education, he stumbled onto Early Childhood. As with the choice to focus on elementary, an early childhood specialization was something he hadn't considered:

> I had no idea that the Early Childhood program existed until one day I was feeling sorry for myself, because when you come from Small Town __________(the neighbouring province) you're overwhelmed by [Highlands] and going to a university where the population of the university is twice the size of your home town. And in your first year you don't have a place to go, you're all over the place with your elements [elective subjects]. You're in one building or another, you're not in Education, so you don't really identify [with it]. So I was feeling sorry for myself one day and thought: "I'm going to go and see what this Education building is all about." I was walking through and there was a sign: "Elementary students, this Society is for you," and I thought: "Oh no, did I miss something?" I was really shocked, so I went up and I talked to the girl and she said: "Oh, we're the Early Childhood Society." Well, what's early childhood? She proceeded to tell me and I thought: "That's what I want to do." I thought I was going to be able to teach kindergarten. And I can't if I'm not in Early Childhood. So I joined the Society, became an executive member three days later, and because of that I got into the Early Childhood program. So, no, it wasn't intentional. When I first came to university I was planning on going into secondary, and for some reason I chose

> elementary and then, as a twist of fate, I found out about the Early Childhood program, and here I am.

Thoughts on the Program. Leger entered the baccalaureate program in education expecting to acquire the knowledge of how to teach young children and start them on their school careers. But he doesn't feel the program provides this. He describes the general elementary program as "far too philosophically based," and decries the fact that they give scant attention to the basic skills of teaching. On the Early Childhood program, however, he lavishes much praise, for he feels that the learning centre approach has many positive features.

Like the others, he views the non-education electives as useless, although some of them he found interesting.

Unlike the other key informants, his non-preferred practicum experience was not a positive one (grade 5/6). While he claims that some might have envied him his placement, for he did virtually no teaching, Leger was discouraged by it. With the exception of directing a play for the Christmas concert, he had little involvement with with the children.

He also came away disillusioned with the lack of professionalism he noted in many of the school staff. He referred to the clamour to clear the school by four o'clock and the lack of lesson preparation by his cooperating teacher.

The Future. Leger doesn't have definite ideas about his future, although those he does have relate in some way to education. He likes the idea of having his own classroom, but also speaks of doing graduate studies in child psychology. He mentions the possibility of operating his own daycare and, in the same breath, relates an interest in conducting research on gifted children.

He strongly views his role as a teacher as one of a socializing agent. He speaks frequently of "getting them interested," or "getting them started" on the road to a good education; getting them interested in good literature; getting them interested in learning; being a resource person. He wants to make the education experience a good one for young children.

Margo

Margo was born in the early '60s near the city of Highlands. She was raised on a farm which is still operated by her family today.

Schooling. All of Margo's basic education took place in Christian schools. Her elementary years are, at best, distant memories. When we talked about these years, she most readily recalled herself in a social role. She was well-liked, although somewhat shy. Margo was very active in sports and other extra-curricular activities, and by the end of her elementary years this shyness has disappeared.

Interestingly, Margo remembers having her best teacher in grade 2. She describes her as "very caring," as someone who could relate to the children. Not surprisingly, her worst teacher (grade 6) was a stern disciplinarian. Margo disliked the way he separated the class into ability groups (the "smarties" and the "dummies").

Generally~~ these were~~ good years, and Margo did well in elementary school.

Secondary school was also very enjoyable for her. Once again, her social roles stand out. She does recall being somewhat intimidated when she entered high school because she felt she was "scrawny." But she quickly overcame this. She enjoyed French and mathematics most, and was most comfortable with those teachers who had a "bubbly" demeanour.

The Decision to Become a Teacher. Margo has never really made a conscious choice to pursue a career as a teacher. In fact, she doesn't see herself as wanting to be a teacher, at least not in a formal sense of the word: "If I never taught a day in my life it wouldn't bother me."

Margo left high school with no sense at all of what she wanted to do. She entered a nearby community college and pursued an early childhood diploma. She worked for a number of years in a special-needs program and gained experience in dealing with children who had speech difficulties. This sparked an interest in what she terms "therapy" settings.

After a few years of work experience, Margo decided to enter university. Her initial thoughts were to focus on speech therapy, but she learned that she would have to start from the very beginning since few of her college credits could be transferred towards a degree in this area. As an alternative, she enrolled in the Elementary Division of Highlands University and minored in both Early Childhood and Languages. From the time she began taking courses, she leaned strongly towards "special" settings with young children. But as a result of her non-preferred practicum - a very positive experience - she's rethinking the possibility of regular classroom teaching.

Thoughts on the Program. Margo entered the baccalaureate education degree expecting it to be a "re-hash" of what she had learned at the community college. To a certain extent she's been disappointed: "A lot of it's bullshit, I think." Courses, in her opinion, are either good or bad depending on the instructor. She is herself an organized individual, and had little patience with university instructors who were ill prepared.

She deviates significantly from most of her classmates on her opinions of university courses. Margo enjoys the student life - taking courses, writing papers, attending lectures - and does not scrutinize each course for its relevance to teaching. In fact, she feels that the non-education courses she's taken have been more interesting than those from the School of Education. She attributes this to her varied interests. On education courses, she feels they become meaningful only once they're applied in a field setting.

Her non-preferred placement during the first term of the third year was a good experience. She established a positive relationship with her cooperating teacher and thoroughly enjoyed the children. Initially she felt a degree of trepidation about teaching at upper elementary. But as the weeks passed she decided that it was less work than early childhood as the students were capable of more individual work.

The Future. When I asked Margo what she hoped to be doing five to ten years from now, she responded: "travelling." Once one comes to know Margo, one realizes that responses like this are to be taken seriously. She hopes to work overseas in Third World countries. If she's working in an educational setting, she hopes to focus on linguistics. [Margo graduated shortly before this account was written. She didn't apply for a teaching position for the coming year. Instead, she has an interest in Third World cultures and hopes to travel overseas.]

If she becomes a classroom teacher, Margo feels that her primary role will be to encourage children to exercise their creativity. When she talks of herself as a teacher, words like "open-ended" and "flexible" are mentioned frequently. In many ways they aptly describe her personality.

Melinda

Melinda was born in the mid '60s in Highlands. Her early years were spent in the city, but her family later moved to a community outside the city limits. Melinda's father works as a contractor/excavator, and her mother is employed as a cashier.

Schooling. Like others, Melinda remembers her early school years mostly for the good social experiences. She speaks of the "good" teachers as those who were friendly and who related well to children.

Her years in junior and senior high school were similar. She talks of one teacher who bordered on violence with the children, frequently throwing things (like chalk) at them when they were inattentive. But she speaks most fondly of those who had the ability to communicate with adolescents on their own level without talking down to them or creating unnecessary barriers.

The Decision to Become a Teacher. Melinda remembers playing school as a young child, although she can't isolate any particular time or experience when she decided she would become a teacher. She does feel, however, that she was always headed in that direction. She never seriously considered any other career options, but adds that if her teaching career doesn't blossom, she'll likely select a career alternative that involves work with computers.

When she entered Highlands University it was her intention to apply for admission to Early Childhood. Had she not been accepted, she was planning to take as many courses in that minor area as possible. She enjoys the company of young children and likes the idea of having a career which permits her to work with them. [Melinda tends to be very self-conscious, a trait I noticed once I came to know her reasonably well. During this initial interview she told me that she's noticed that now that others know she is in Early Childhood, they tend to scrutinize her behaviour when she's in the presence of young children. She finds this situation irritating.]

Thoughts on the Program. Melinda entered education hoping to learn about the development of children and how she could help them grow socially. In addition, she expected the courses to help her develop classroom teaching skills.

She agrees with many of her classmates that the choice of non-education electives is "senseless," and that the better courses are the C and I ones. When she speaks of an education course as bad, it is usually in some way related to the instructor and whether he or she has provided "practical" information that the students can use once they become full-time teachers.

Her non-preferred placement during the practicum was "fantastic." She enjoyed interacting with the children in the class (grade 6) and felt they appreciated her. She received little guidance and criticism from her cooperating teacher but ended the experience with an excellent evaluation.

She said that the students had been encouraged in some C and I courses to script what they would say to the children during student teaching (a trait I noticed when I visited her during her preferred placement), but she attempted to be more flexible as the weeks passed.

The Future. Melinda hopes to teach at the early childhood level for a few years. She would also like to marry and have children. While it was never mentioned, I came away from the interview feeling that she would be quite content to function in the role of a housewife.

Melinda tends to view a teacher as a conveyor of knowledge, someone who is able to help young children become more knowledgeful and skillful. She adds that it is important to be a friend to the children, yet, in the next breath, she points out that a teacher needs to maintain a distance from their students. [This aspect of the teacher's role created problems for her during the preferred practicum.]

Looking Ahead

The next chapter, "The University Experience," is the first of two data chapters in this thesis. The focus in Chapter 4 is on the experiences of the Early Childhood students during the six weeks of university classes while I was with them.

CHAPTER 4

THE UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

CLASSROOM LIFE

Structural Elements

Early Childhood

Physical Setting. Two classrooms were reserved for the exclusive use of students minoring in Early Childhood. One functioned as the principal meeting area and the site of most instructor-directed activities, while the other served primarily as an overflow and storage area. The very fact that two rooms were allotted to one small group of students was rare in the School of Education, but the instructors lobbied for a permanent location so that they could arrange the rooms in a manner consistent with the Early Childhood philosophy.

Both rooms are at the end of a long, narrow hallway punctuated by a series of classrooms and offices. Two glass-panelled display cases have been built into the cement walls of the corridor immediately outside the classrooms, one in either wall. Throughout the term these were used to house materials which the students had prepared for an assignment on family trees. Subsequently, when I passed by on my way to or from class I would occasionally pause to examine the variety of photographs revealing generations of each student's family. A small moveable wooden display rack stands outside the two rooms, holding documents or posters of significance to Early Childhood students. Two bulletin boards hang on opposite walls nearby, one festooned with posters and advertisements, the other displaying information pertaining to class assignments. Consequently, this latter one invariably had a cluster of students about it, especially prior to class. This particular display, which I'll subsequently refer to as the planning board, has eight sheets of construction paper secured to it, each color-coded to represent a different dimension of early childhood education. These are: The Child, Family/Environment, Foundation Knowledge, Learning Experiences, Personnel, Professional Services, Facilities, and Personal Planning. On each is a file card indicating a required activity, and on each card is a small circle which has been divided into quarters. Each quarter represents one class day (there are four classes per week), and a number from one to four is marked in to indicate how long the card has been on the board. If it is only to be left up for three days, one of the squares is darkened. If there is an asterisk on the card the activity is a compulsory one, i.e., it must be handed in to the instructor for her comments. Otherwise it is there as a recommended learning. Each student is required to note these activities on a weekly log sheet (Appendix 2). These sheets are structured to allow for questions and comments from the students, all of which are regularly read by the instructor and commented upon.

When I first entered the main classroom I was immediately struck by its arrangement. Instead of rows of desks facing a front board, or a seminar arrangement with chairs about a large table, as one might have expected in a university setting, the room was arranged in learning centres. Each centre represented one of the eight dimensions of the planning board and is a self-contained learning unit. A typical centre had a table with three or four chairs and cardboard "walls" on three sides to offer a degree of privacy. Materials were set out on the table and pinned to the walls. The size of each centre limited the number of students who could comfortably work there at any given time, usually no more than three. At the same time, the proximity of the students at any one centre encouraged their interaction. Working together is a major emphasis in the Early Childhood program, and this structural arrangement facilitates, virtually demands it.

The centres were arranged along three sides of the classroom, leaving an open area in the middle. There was no desk for the instructor. She usually sat on a table at the front of the room, or moved about from centre to centre talking with the students. There was a chalkboard at the front, but it was used infrequently. An overhead projector sat by the front board on a wheeled metal table obviously constructed for just that purpose. Beside it were two metal cabinets containing the coffee and tea supplies.

The other classroom is much smaller and, considering the number of tables, filing cabinets and displays, has a cluttered appearance. The arrangement once again was in learning centres, those for which there was insufficient space in the main classroom. In addition, one of the filing cabinets contained each student's "file," a folder which each individual maintained documenting his or her activities throughout the term.

Seating. Within a matter of two or three days I noticed that students were very consistent in their seating pattern in class. As the term progressed it became apparent that for many of the students there were two dimensions associated with seating arrangements: location of the seat and the person or persons with whom each chose to sit. In fact, primary or friendship groups were evident in the class. Holly, Janet and Edith always sat together, as did Melinda, Anise and Nancy. Pam and Cathy were invariably seated by each other, as were Leger and Bobbie. These associations extended beyond a simple "proximity relationship." They frequently worked together on class projects, replicated this seating pattern in EdAdmin, and associated outside the classroom or university context. I asked Anise one day about her relationship with Melinda and Nancy. She said that she and Melinda had been in a class together the previous year and had become friends. In addition, Melinda and Nancy had become friends in a similar manner. So with Melinda as the central link of the group, the three of them worked together throughout the term and associated on occasional weekends. She added, however, that since Nancy had recently married they saw her less often.

The situation with Holly, Janet and Edith was slightly different. In many ways Edith was an "add-on" member of this group, for the primary relationship was between Holly and Janet. Edith joined the group more recently as a result of association through university classes, but her relationship with Holly and Janet lacked the obvious intensity of their longer friendship. Nevertheless, they worked together on one class assignment and always sat together in both Early Childhood and EdAdmin. It was with these three that I chose to sit when I joined the class, primarily because their location at the back offered the opportunity to scan the room without looking conspicuous. Interestingly, this choice had strong implications for my relationship with them, especially with Holly and Janet.

Another association of which I became aware was between Anne and Jeanne. While I never had the opportunity to get to know these two, I learned that they had both recently transferred from a nearby community college, and so shared that past association. In fact, Margo and Denise also transferred from the same college, and all four sat together in class. But the relationship between Anne and Jeanne was closer, as they worked together on projects and sat together in EdAdmin while Margo and Denise did not.

As I became aware of these primary relationships within the classroom, I began to suspect that the most important aspect of the seating arrangement was the friendship association and not the location. While this may be true, one incident in particular made me realize that there is a degree of territoriality associated with regular seating habits. On the day in question I entered the classroom and was immediately aware that the chairs in the area where I usually sat had been slightly rearranged. Jackets were draped over the back which I didn't recognize. As I approached the area Anne and Jeanne seated themselves in these chairs, having deserted their usual location for some reason. Since Holly, Janet and Edith regularly sat here, I decided to position myself nearby and observe their reaction, if any, upon entering. When they entered they came directly to this area. Janet immediately confronted them in her characteristically humorous way: "You guys looking for a scrap?" Anne and Jeanne seemed taken aback, though I suspect they knew very well what Janet meant. Holly and Janet didn't force the issue, and seated themselves elsewhere for that period, returning to their usual seats the next day. This incident, and others during the term, point out that location is an important aspect of classroom situation, and that changes, while not necessarily challenged, do not go unnoticed.

Time Structuring. The Early Childhood students met for class four times per week, Monday to Thursday. Two of these classes, on Tuesday and Thursday, were held in the afternoon and were designated as "lab" days. This time was mainly intended for individual work on assigned activities. The classes on Monday and Wednesday mornings were partially devoted to lecture or instructor-directed activities, as well as independent work. This differentiation, however, varied, and the actual use of any given class period depended on circumstances at the time. Each period was scheduled for three hours, although the students were free to leave whenever they wished. Most usually remained for at least two hours.

Many of the students arrived early for class. This provided them with an opportunity to survey the planning board to determine whether new activities have been added or old ones extended. They recorded this information on their weekly logs, and this formed the basis for much of their work during independent time. By the time the instructor, Dr. Mullen, arrived, most of the students had taken "their" seats and were engaged in informal interaction with each other. She usually exchanged greetings and comments with students nearby, or with those who had approached her seeking advice on some matter.

The period began with Dr. Mullen asking if there were any "announcements." This was a time when students could share items of interest with others. Upcoming events, interesting books, personal encounters and resource materials usually dominated this period. Sharing time was an integral and important component of the class, and on the one and only day when it seemed Dr. Mullen would forget to call for announcements, Dana was quick to remind her. In order to emphasize the importance attached to this time by many of the students (related later), I have chosen to use one day as an example.

On this particular day Dana began the sharing time (Dana is a regular contributor to this activity) by reminding her classmates of a workshop on learning centres to take place the following week. She also told of an annual conference in a nearby province which [Leger attested] is of interest and benefit to student teachers. In addition, Dana informed the class that another Early Childhood instructor had just given her a handout containing practical ideas that teachers can use with young children on Groundhog Day. Once Dana had finished, Leger told of a theatrical production in the near future which deals with sexual harrassment. Denise then informed her classmates that she possesses a binder of ideas related to "celebrations," plus a reference list of poems. Lynn announced that she has a resource file which others are welcome to share. These represent typical "announcements," many of which students are quick to note. Gwen referred to many of these items as "recipes," a term I heard regularly. The amount of time devoted to sharing time varied. On most days it would take between fifteen and thirty minutes. On rare occasions it went on much longer.

Announcements were usually followed by some type of instructor-directed activity. However, as the term progressed and the students completed assignments, more and more of this time was devoted to class presentations. Lectures were intentionally rare during the term as the Early Childhood philosophy focuses almost exclusively on student-directed activities. On those occasions when Dr. Mullen did lecture she normally presented her lesson in thirty to forty minutes, leaving the rest of the period for other activities.

Instructor-directed time was usually followed by snacks. In years past this has usually just meant tea and coffee. However, this particular group of students did a unit on nutrition the previous year and now bring snacks to class. The instructor supports this but insists, sometimes in vain, that they be nutritious. Each day two different students were required to provide the snack, boil the water for tea and coffee, and clean up after class. Dr. Mullen drafted a sign-up sheet early in the term allowing students to choose the day on which they would accept this responsibility.

The remainder of the period was devoted to independent work. During this time students either moved from centre to centre undertaking required activities, or engaged in planning and preparing assignments. There was invariably a hum of activity in both rooms during independent time as the very nature of centre work and assignment preparation encourages interaction. From this point on students could leave as they wished.

Topics and Activities. On the first day of class students were given a course outline and assignment profile. Five objectives were outlined:

1. To develop an awareness of the impact an environment can have on the young child.
2. To develop the skills necessary to create a child centered environment.
3. To acquire skill in selecting and creating appropriate materials and equipment for a child centered environment.
4. To understand the importance of the family environment.
5. To become familiar with techniques for communicating with parents and involving them in an early childhood program.

A list of textbooks was included in the outline, four under the title of "required textbooks," and two labelled as "highly recommended textbooks." In addition, Dr. Mullen suggested that the textbook the students used last year in Early Childhood would be useful. She spoke disparagingly of the prices of many of the texts, and consequently recommended only those she considered absolutely necessary.

The students were required to undertake three major assignments, constituting eighty percent of their grade. The first was called "Indoor Environments or Working With Parents." The assignment was to be done by groups of two or three people and presented in class. Each group was required to develop a display, limited to the area of one carrel or table, which provided information about the topic, as well as a three or four page handout, and an oral presentation limited to fifteen minutes duration. Assignment # 1 counted for twenty percent of the term mark.

The second assignment focused specifically on each student's adopt-a-family child. Students were required to review relevant literature on program development in early childhood education and develop a list of criteria for assessing such a program. Each was to visit "their" child's classroom or daycare at least twice and assess the environment using these criteria. They were expected to talk with the teachers and parents to ascertain program goals and expectations. In addition, they should spend time with the children in order to understand their school experiences. This was to be assembled in an eight to ten page assessment package. Assignment # 2 counted for forty percent of the term mark.

The third and final assignment was to develop a flowchart and prop box on some topic of interest to young children. Each student was required to visit the classroom where they would be teaching during the practicum in order to observe the children. Based on this observation each was to develop a flowchart which reflects the child's needs and interests. Some aspect of this flowchart was then to be developed into a prop box. [A prop box is a collection of materials developed around a theme of interest to young children]. For instance, two or three groups developed prop boxes around a bakery theme. They assembled a variety of relevant materials - rolling pins, cookie cutters, dough, toy ovens, measuring utensils, cups and bowls - and placed them in a cardboard box or a similar container. The prop box was to be used with the children in school. The students were to hand in a two page summary specifying how the materials were used by the children, the role they (the student teachers) played, and an assessment of their professional development as a result of doing the assignment. Each also provided a two page handout for their classmates showing the flowchart, listing the materials, specifying additional reference items, and explaining their rationale for selecting the materials in the box. The prop boxes were to be presented in class. Assignment # 3 constituted twenty percent of the course grade.

The final twenty percent of the course evaluation was assigned for participation in ongoing activities. This focused on attendance, personal reflections provided by the students in their weekly logs, discussions, and in-class contributions and activities.

In addition to the three major assignments, there were a variety of other activities in which the students engaged throughout the term. When they were not working on presentations, the majority of class time was devoted to centre work. As mentioned previously, there were eight major learning centres in the two rooms representing different dimensions of early childhood education. A brief description of each follows.

The Foundation Knowledge centre was marked from early in the term with an asterisk, indicating that this is a required activity. The focus is on a Local Advisory Committee (LAC), a committee of parents and the kindergarten teacher(s) for each school established to assist in the design and operation of a kindergarten program. Dr. Mullen related that this centre was developed in response to complaints from cooperating teachers that their student teachers were unfamiliar with the LAC. At the centre the students were required to read the handouts provided and, if possible, talk with kindergarten teachers about these committees. At a later date they were expected to share this information in a small group forum.

No activities had been designated for the Child centre. I asked Dr. Mullen about this. She replied that the students had considerable exposure to this dimension of early childhood in an earlier course. Furthermore, the emphasis in this particular course was on environments. Even without specific centre work, however, the characteristics of young children frequently permeated class discussion as children form the foundation upon which programs are structured.

The centre labelled Facilities focused on classroom arrangements. A small area in the overflow room had been set aside for this purpose. It consisted of a waist-high table with a five to eight centimeter wooden border about the surface area. On the wall behind were four diagrams representing different ways of arranging a kindergarten classroom. Beside the main table was a smaller one piled with bags of wooden miniature furniture: kitchen facilities (refrigerator, oven, sink), coat rack, washroom unit (two sinks and two toilets), teacher's desk, round work tables, a sand/water table, students' desks and a loft. The students were required to arrange the furniture, considering such factors as the location of quiet and noisy activities, and wet and dry ones.

At the Learning Experiences centre resource material was provided for those students doing presentations in curricular areas in the fine arts, environmental studies and literacy. The provision of materials in this centres saved students from having to search for this material in the library.

In the Family/Environment centre students were exposed to the concept of "building bridges" between the home and school. Readings, videotapes and filmstrips were provided which focused on ways of involving parents in school programs.

Various textbooks and documents were provided in the Professional Resources centre. Some of the documents included information on professional organizations of which Dr. Mullen felt the students needed to be cognizant. She viewed this centre as a means of building professional awareness.

The Personnel centre initially focused on a family tree assignment, and was marked as compulsory. I asked Dr. Mullen why the students were being asked to reveal their family histories. She asserted that it is a way for the students to become more familiar with each other, and also a means by which she learns more about each of them. In fact, this very point was raised by Jill, the first presenter, upon learning that she is distantly related to Gwen: "...you find out you may be related to even classroom friends."

The last centre, Personal Planning, was also marked as compulsory, but only one activity appeared throughout the term. Students were asked to complete a Personal Student Information Sheet and hand it in. Information was solicited on basic demographics, student backgrounds (courses taken in Early Childhood, teaching experience, community activities and work with children), personal information which each might wish to share with the instructor, including course expectations, and an assessment of individual strengths and weaknesses in relation to the objectives of the Early Childhood program.

Throughout the term other means were used to reinforce dominant themes in Early Childhood. The students watched five films or filmstrips, all of which lauded a relatively unstructured or open approach to classroom organization. The first, entitled "Creating Classroom Environments for Personalized Learning," elaborated on a host of ideas for room arrangements and activities. The next day the students saw a film on open education entitled "Open Education in England." Special emphasis was given to the utilization of the out-of-doors. A week later Dr. Mullen played a video giving strong support to the use of learning centres, "Free to Learn." Two weeks later we saw a production called "To Make A Difference," focusing on open education in the '80's.

The last film was shown one week after this. It was entitled "Learning Centres," and two points stressed in the production encapsulate the essential themes of all five productions:

1. Children are active learners.
2. A child's way to work is to play.

We were joined by a guest speaker late in the term, a colleague of Dr. Mullen's with a specialization in whole language approaches to reading. She spoke to the class for one hour, conveying the central message that print needs to meaningful to young children if they are to become avid and enthusiastic readers. As with the films, her presentation melded nicely with the child-centered approach to learning underlying the Early Childhood program.

Educational Administration

Physical Setting. The EdAdmin classroom is located at the opposite end of the Education complex from the two Early Childhood rooms, and on a different floor. And whereas the Early Childhood classrooms are reserved solely for the use of their students, the EdAdmin room is like most others: assigned anew at the first of each term.

The room itself is of moderate size and exhibits a starkness and predictability which prevents one from mistaking it for other than it is. In many ways I find it hard to describe, and as such I am frequently reminded of the way in which Philip Jackson (1979:22) described classrooms:

> A classroom, like a church auditorium, is rarely seen as being anything other than that which it is. No one entering either place is likely to think that he is in a living room, or a grocery store, or a train station. Even if he entered at midnight or

> at some other time when the activities of the people would not give the function away, he would have no difficulty understanding what was *supposed* to go on there. Even devoid of people, a church is a church and a classroom, a classroom.

The walls are made of concrete blocks which have been painted white. A chalkboard covers most of one wall with a retractable screen suspended just in front of it. Windows traverse another wall, but the outside light is mediated by Venetian blinds. Desk-chairs are haphazardly arranged over much of the grey-tiled floor. The semblance of side-to-side rows disappears completely when viewing from front or back. As if in testament to some uninteresting class, two pink paper airplanes were stuck nose-first in the two air vents high along one wall. At the front of the room stands a plain rectangular table with two solitary chairs. The room is purely functional; owned by no one but used by everyone. In every sense it stands in striking contrast to the Early Childhood rooms.

Seating. Owing to the presence of the other class of elementary students, the room was usually crowded. Nonetheless, those students who always sat together in Early Childhood made every effort to do so here. Occasionally their efforts were disrupted by the unpredictable seating habits of some of the general students, but more often than not they managed to sit in the same areas with preferred neighbours.

Once again both seat location and friendship associations seemed important to many of the students, though location was less predictable in this room. I remember one day in particular when Anise entered late and noticed that Nancy and Melinda were not seated where the three of them had been during the previous class. She paused momentarily, scanned the room for the two girls and spying them, gave a nod of recognition and proceeded to their location. There were no assigned seats, simply choices on behalf of certain individuals to sit with whom they feel comfortable.

In terms of the overall seating pattern in the room, the Early Childhood students tended to sit together in two general clusters. A small group of seven or eight sat at the very front of the room. But by far the largest cluster was nearer the back. I sat in the last row against the back wall with Margo, Leger and Dana. As in the other classroom, this offered the best vantage point from which to take notes yet remain relatively unnoticed. Not surprisingly, sitting near these three students had a significant impact on our developing relationships.

Time Structuring. The students met for Educational Administration twice a week for three hours, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Class began at 8:00 a.m., a fact which invariably drew adverse comments from a number of students. Aside from the early hour, EdAdmin was scheduled on the same days as the Early Childhood labs, making for long hours in class.

Periods usually involved a combination of instructor-directed activity and group discussion. As there were two instructors, the way in which they present their lessons varied. One instructor in particular, Dr. Woodward, regularly included the students in the topic by baiting them and assuming the role of a devil's advocate when they volunteer comments. The other, Dr. Colwell, was less extroverted and conducted his sessions in a more quiet and subdued manner.

The instructors shared the teaching load for the course although Dr. Woodward, by the very nature of his personality, tended to dominate when he was present. Each assumed responsibility for the presentation of certain topics while the other sat in a chair at the front of the room. This was more typical of Dr. Colwell, however, for it was not Dr. Woodward's nature to sit quietly for extended periods of time. There were days when Dr. Colwell, though present, scarcely uttered a word.

Discussion sessions frequently involved dividing the class into small groups to explore assigned issues, then reconvening in an attempt to bring closure to the topic. On the second day of class Dr. Colwell created eight groups in the room by what he called the "army method." Proceeding in an orderly fashion each person called out a number from one to eight (sequentially) and those of like numbers constituted one group. I was in a group with Pam and Georgie and four girls from the other section.

These small group sessions were particularly common early in the term when we were dealing with the role of the teacher and the concept of professionalism. Discussion usually focused on one or more case studies, with the group frequently referring to the provincial School Act or the members' handbook of the local teachers' association for guidance. For example, the very first case study involved a woman who had received a written job offer from a school board which she had accepted in writing. Before receiving confirmation of employment from the board, however, she received a more attractive offer from another board. When the first board finally sent an acceptance letter and learned of the other offer, they refused to release her from her contractual obligations. The students were expected to discuss this situation using the references provided with the case and decide upon an appropriate course of action. Once finished, we moved on to the next assigned case. When we had dealt with all of them we reassembled in the main classroom to learn how other groups had fared. This was a typical pattern on group discussion days.

At midpoint during each class we had a fifteen or twenty minute break. Most of the students took this opportunity to purchase a cup of coffee or other beverage at a cafeteria within the building and relax over casual conversation.

Topics and Activities. The course content was segmented into three general areas of inquiry, each composed of a number of specific topics. These are outlined below:

1. The Teacher's Role as a Professional
    - Candidate for Employment
    - Contractual Rights and Duties
    - The Teacher as a Member of a Profession
    - The [provincial teachers' association]

2. Governance of Education
    - The Constitutional Basis for Education
    - Education in [the Province]
    - Local Control/Involvement in Education
    - Funding of Education

3. School and Classroom Management
    - The Teacher in the School/The Organization of Schools
    - The Teacher and the Community

With only minor variation we followed this schedule throughout the term.

The students were required to complete two short quizzes for a total of twenty percent of their mark. The first was composed of fourteen true or false statements. The second had a variety of question types: six multiple choice, five short answer and twenty true or false.

Twenty-five percent of their evaluation was based on an essay which they were to compose on an assigned topic: "The [Province] School Teacher in the '90s." The instructors told the students that they should focus on technological change and values when preparing the paper.

Unlike Early Childhood, the students were required to write a final exam valued at forty percent of the course mark.

Ten percent of the grade was assigned to "participation," and five percent "unassigned." Cathy asked Dr. Colwell to clarify this unassigned portion of the mark. "We may use it in various and sundry ways. That was [Dr. Woodward's] suggestion," he replied.

In addition to regular class activities, two guest speakers joined us at different times during the term. The first was a professional development officer from the provincial teachers' association who, predictably, spoke on the structure of the association and aspects of membership.

The second guest was a female graduate student in Education with a background in educational finance. As if attempting to establish her authority for her, Dr. Colwell introduced her by telling us that she has taught at the junior high school level "...so she can handle tough guys." He also told us that he is fond of including this material on the final exam. So having subtly been told that we were to behave and display keen interest for our own good, we listened to her for approximately half the period. She spoke on the financing of school programs, frequently asking low-order questions which largely went unanswered.

We were also shown a video presentation at the time we were dealing with the topic of discipline. It was entitled "Sit Down, Shut Up, or Get Out," a story of a seemingly intelligent adolescent student who draws the ire of his teachers because he behaves differently than other students. In an attempt to tell the story through his eyes, much of the action occurred in a court-like setting.

Summary and Discussion

The structural arrangements in the two Early Childhood rooms were strikingly different from what I have witnessed in other university classrooms. There was a definite attempt on the part of the instructors to replicate the time and space arrangements which they expect the students to use once they become classroom teachers. This was plainly evident on at least three dimensions: the physical arrangement in the rooms, time allocation throughout each period, and the manner in which Dr. Mullen conducted herself during class time.

The rooms were patterned on the learning centre concept. This is representative of a type of "informal" classroom structure, one which allows "... activities to occur with maximum self-directed activity" (Feeney et al., 1983:147). There were eight centres in the two rooms, each one able to accomodate three or four students at a time. All learning materials were provided at each site and the students were free to spend as much or as little time as they wished in any one area.

Time allocation during each period usually exhibited four components: sharing time (announcements), instructor-directed activity, snack and independent time. This was remarkably similar to the time patterns which I observed in many of the kindergarten rooms I visited during the practicum. There the day might begin with teacher-directed activities of some sort, followed by a time during which certain students shared something with others (a toy, book, or other item from home), all followed by free or centre time. At some point during the day the children were frequently provided with a snack. There were variations, of course, particularly on the central issue of the relative amount of time given over to self-directed activities. Insofar as this is true, the routine in the Early Childhood classroom was more representative of what the instructors would *like* to see in elementary schools, not necessarily what the students would discover during the practicum.

Dr. Mullen's behaviour as an instructor was also a form of role modelling. She treated the students in a way which encouraged their participation and gave value to their opinions. During the periods she moved about the room from centre to centre talking with the students and giving advice where needed. Only rarely did she lecture, and even then she made every effort to actively involve the students in the lesson.

The majority of each period was usually devoted to independent work. During this time students selected a centre at which to work, or spent their time preparing one of the major assignments. The main point is that the time was theirs to use as they wished. Certainly there was work to be done, but how and when it got done was a matter of personal preference. Furthermore, centre time invariably involved regular interaction with others, either in the form of casual conversation at one of the centres or in group discussion on an assigned activity. In this way the message was conveyed that learning is an interactive process, not something that can only occur when everyone is working quietly on their own or listening to a teacher.

This overall arrangement, of course, was intentional. I asked Dr. Mullen about these structural elements during an interview early in the term:

> We've opted for the pattern that we've chosen because we believe that we need to model the kind of philosophy and classroom organization we're expecting people to use; so if we do just lectures, then we're not giving people experience in working independently, in working in small groups, in having large group discussions that provide feedback. So basically it's to serve as a model.

There was an additional component to this arrangement as well. By requiring the students to largely direct the use of their own time, Dr. Mullen felt that they were being provided with a vicarious experience:

> Also, I think they need to experience - and many of them do experience - a lot of frustration, especially in the beginning when they can't figure the system out... They need to know that so they can see that children go through that - they need to be patient with it, and so if they haven't experienced it, they won't understand what children are going through; and so we view it as a process, and to understand a process you must experience it.

This message was not lost on the students. I asked Janet one day why the classroom was arranged in learning centres. Her response was typical of comments which others had made on this topic:

> Well that's the philosophy of Early Childhood to go into the learning centre approach, so they think that if we get involved in it, it helps us to understand what kids are going through.

Referring to seating patterns, I earlier identified the existence of primary groups within the classroom. Citing the classic work of Charles H. Cooley, Olmstead and Hare (1978:7) characterize members of a primary group as displaying "... warm, intimate, and 'personal' ties with one another." This is distinguished from secondary groups, in which relations are "...'cool,' impersonal, rational, contractual, and formal" (Olmstead and Hare, 1978:8). While I think it would be a mistake to categorize the whole class as a secondary group by this definition, there is no doubt of the existence of close friendship groups within it. Most noticeable were Holly, Janet and Edith, and Anise, Melinda and Nancy. With the exception of Holly and Janet, all of the friendship relationships of which I became aware formed as a result of individuals brought together in university classrooms. Once established in one setting (a classroom), these groups tended to sit together and work together in other settings (other classrooms, cafeteria), and frequently associated outside of the university context.

The structural arrangements in EdAdmin were more typical of my experience in university (and for that matter, school) lectures. Desk-chairs were arranged in pseudo-rows, most of the activities were instructor-directed, and class time was usually given to some mix of lecture, question-answer sessions and group discussion.

Unlike Early Childhood, the instructors' behaviour did not appear to be an intentional attempt to model "ideal" teacher conduct, although modelling is obviously what they were doing. Whereas Dr. Mullen attempted to facilitate learning by structuring experiences which encouraged student initiative, Drs. Woodward and Colwell adopted a classroom orientation which more readily approximated a "conveyor of knowledge" instructor behaviour. I don't mean to imply that they lectured unceasingly - they didn't. But class activities were largely controlled by them and the students spent a sizeable portion of their time listening and following.

The students tended to follow the same seating patterns they had established in Early Childhood. Primary groups tended to sit together and, where possible, remain in the same general location class after class. The Early Childhood students also identified strongly with each other, refraining from establishing any obvious relations (in class and out of class) with the general elementary students.

Insofar as the course content focused on appropriate and inappropriate teacher behaviour, I consider it to be directed towards the socializing of preservice teachers into the world of teaching and school organizations. And whereas the Early Childhood course content emphasized a *this-is-what-we'd-like-to-see* stance, EdAdmin conveyed a *this-is-the-way-it-is* message.

The Instructors

My primary focus in this study was on students of teaching. Consequently, the majority of my time in the field was spent observing and talking with students - some more than others - in order to gain a greater understanding of what this experience means to them. As I have elaborated in an earlier chapter, I believe that meaning must be understood in the context in which it arises. Certainly an important part of these students' context are the course instructors. I attended classes regularly and I listened to what the instructors said, I observed how they organized and presented their lessons, I noted the ways in which they structured classtime, and I attuned myself to the comments and reactions of the students to all of this. But the study is not about the instructors, other than how they enter into the lives of their students. All of what I'm about to relate must be understood in this context.

I have already described the ways in which the three instructors conducted themselves in class and how they structured student time. I wish now to delve a little deeper by focusing briefly on two other instructor-related dimensions: aspects of speech and behaviour which reveal certain assumptions about children, schooling, teaching and education; and the views of the students - at least those with whom I associated frequently - about their instructors. In the case of Dr. Mullen, the Early Childhood instructor, I have included a sample of comments made by the students on the course evaluation forms which they each completed at the end of the term. Having read them carefully, they reflect the impression I had formed in talking with certain students.

Early Childhood

Dr. Mullen. That Dr. Mullen believed strongly in a child-centered approach to schooling needs little elaboration here. The way in which she has structured the Early Childhood classrooms and periods, in an intentional attempt to model "appropriate" teacher behaviour, speaks for itself. The underlying pedagogical assumption is that children engage actively in the learning process; that they do not have empty heads which await filling. In order to facilitate active learning, Dr. Mullen believes that learning environments must be made meaningful to the children:

> I guess I've always believed very firmly that we need to provide environments for children, especially young children, that are meaningful and environments where children have some choices and some control and some responsibility.

During the term Dr. Mullen made a number of statements which betray her views on young children as students. For example, on motivation:

> (approximate recall) Young children do not need to be motivated. If they do it's because theirs has been squelched.

On behaviour problems:

> Children tend not to be behaviour problems when they are involved.

On a child's view of curriculum:

Children don't think in subject areas.

These three statements carry certain implicit assumptions about what constitutes appropriate teaching, all of which undergird the Early Childhood philosophy. In the case of motivation, children are considered to be self-directing. Consequently, if teachers construct learning environments replete with objects and activities with which children can readily identify (i.e., call on their own experience), they will actively involve themselves with little or no teacher direction.

The second, on behaviour problems, follows closely from the first. Deviant behaviour will be minimized if learning environments are meaningful to young children. Both of these statements, of course, are revealing when taken in the negative: inappropriate teaching behaviour involves much lecturing, telling and rigid structuring.

The third, on curriculum, betrays an assumption that teachers of young children need to integrate, not segregate, subject areas. In fact, this was essentially a theme throughout the term. Dr. Mullen frequently told the students of the need to view the curriculum through the eyes of the children.

In adopting this orientation of "seeing through the eyes of," Dr. Mullen was especially sensitive to the feelings and attitudes of children. Early in the term she told the students that it was her personal opinion (and stressed this fact) that teachers should not give paper rewards as motivators, as those who didn't get them may feel badly. She felt that the creation of a positive self-concept and enthusiastic attitude toward schooling was a *sine qua non* of student success. Putting aside other basic beliefs about children and schooling, she felt that a relatively unstructured learning environment was justifiable solely on the basis of childrens attitudes towards school.

During one class she related the results of a longitudinal study carried out in a Canadian province comparing a structured classroom setting with an open one. The researcher found that while there was little difference in academic achievement between the students, those in the structured setting had virtually turned off school, while those in the open classroom had very positive attitudes.

Dr. Mullen was equally sensitive to the use of classroom materials which could pose a health risk to children. While demonstrating a brainstorming technique in class one day, she asked the students to call out any item in which children are interested. One mentioned was guns, and she was quick to tell us of her personal bias (her words) against the use of such items with young children. On another day Nancy was reminding the class of a field trip that she was going on with her adopt-a-family child and mentioned the possibility of tobagganing. Dr. Mullen told us that toboggans can be dangerous, and recommended the use of Crazy Carpets and the like. On yet another occasion, while Melinda was presenting her prop box late in the term, Dr. Mullen injected a cautionary note. Melinda had developed a box around a "time" theme and included, amongst other items, an old radio. Dr. Mullen advised the students against using any electrical appliance around young children.

While all of this may represent basic commonsense, it nevertheless fits within the child-centered matrix of the Early Childhood program. Students were regularly exhorted to understand schooling through the eyes of children. As with other aspects of her behaviour, Dr. Mullen, by providing little reminders such as those above, was modelling a teacher conduct in which children are constantly at the fore.

In the process of attempting to proselytize the students to the benefits of an open, child-centered learning environment, Dr. Mullen occasionally spoke disparagingly of many current teaching practices. Whether by design or coincidence, these comments became more frequent as the practicum approached. For instance, when introducing a guest speaker, she commented:

> There are some things you will see teachers do that we now know is not right for young children.

It didn't take long to realize that most teaching behaviour which was not child-centered, or which opposed open education, was "not right." Students occasionally related stories about personal experiences in which a classroom teacher exhibited a behaviour which contravened the Early Childhood philosophy. Dr. Mullen's reaction was predictable. In fact, while I never questioned anyone about it, I am convinced that the students related these stories fully aware of how she would react, indeed seeking and expecting reinforcement for their views. These vignettes took on a look-what-a-terrible-thing-this-teacher-is-doing quality, and let's-make-sure-we-never-do-that. For instance, when Anise was presenting her prop box on "cooking," she told the class that her cooperating teacher did not like the mess created by having sand (as a make-believe cooking material) in the room. Dr. Mullen, seated to one side near the front of the room, slowly turned her head to scan the class, revealing a resigned smile which, to me, said: "I told you there were teachers like this out there." During that same class Cathy told us that her cooperating teacher would only allow her students to read and write while at centres designated for that purpose. Once again Dr. Mullen, without uttering a word, swept the room with her saddened smile.

Dr. Mullen's behaviour towards the Early Childhood students merged congruently with her general philosophy on learning environments and the nature of the student-teacher relationship. Her classroom demeanour was invariably friendly and receptive. Students were encouraged to express their views openly and were expected to take the initiative in directing their own learning. This is the pedagogical underpinning of the learning centre concept. Successful adoption of this instructional style, however, requires teachers to release much traditionally-held control over student learning and to trust the students to exercise self-direction. During one interview early in the term I asked Dr. Mullen why the learning centre concept had not infiltrated higher levels of schooling. She replied:

> I think there are a number of reasons. I think one reason is that many adults have a need to control, and for some people - for many people, and I'm not saying this in a negative way - but teaching is a way of having people *take* from you. I mean, it's a way of giving what you know but it's also a way of controlling those people out there; and you're in full control. You're in control of the information you give, you're in control of deciding whether they've learned it, you're in control of how long the periods last. You have a lot of control in a very traditional way. It's scary to give up that control, because then you have to start really looking at yourself. It's a lot more work to give up that control - emotionally it's a lot more work - you really relate to your students in a different way.

The corollary of relinquishing this control is the placement of trust in each individual student; one must trust that they will "run with the ball," so to speak. Dr. Mullen assumed that this self-directedness stemmed, in part, from a pragmatic self-interest:

> If they're doing the readings, and I have to trust they are - we don't give tests...we assume that you're going to take that

> responsibility - it's your career, it's your profession, it's your responsibility to know what's there.

Whatever its origin, expecting students to exercise wise self-direction was, in her view, a primal ingredient of an open or informal classroom:

> I trust that on those lab days...they're really working on their projects. And if they leave the room to go someplace, I trust...that they're not out at a pub.

Adopting this instructional philosophy was not without drawbacks. Particularly problematic for Dr. Mullen was the assigning of numerical grades to students. In many ways this seemed to contravene everything she believed in and modelled in the classroom. As she mentioned, tests and exams where not a part of Early Childhood. Yet evaluation was still a part of classroom life, and a particularly important part as far as many of the students were concerned. Dr. Mullen was at odds to find a satisfactory alternative:

> ...I don't like assigning numbers to what they do. I wish we didn't have to do that. I would rather just have dialogues going back and forth, and I'm thinking very seriously of whether, especially their group projects...just to have students involved in that evaluation process - a peer evaluation kind of thing - but I've never found a way that I've been totally satisfied with...

Her strong emphasis on trust, sharing, and collegial interaction also conflicted with occasional glimpses of student competitiveness. This was particularly apparent to me during the days of class presentations of assignment # 1. Each successive presentation seemed to offer more elaborate displays and production than the ones before. While there were obvious exceptions to this, there nonetheless appeared to be an element of one-upmanship. I asked Dr. Mullen whether she sensed this or not. She was adamant in her reply: "If it's there, I don't want to see it."

She explained her stance by saying that so much emphasis is given to working together in Early Childhood that she hopes any competitiveness is minimized.

Student Views. It didn't take long for me to conclude that the students were generally very favorably disposed towards Dr. Mullen. They chatted with her amicably, sought her advice on problems, and seemed to relate to her in a way which circumvented a formal student-instructor relationship. One of the students, in the course evaluation, stated: "She didn't really feel like a professor but a good friend." I visited Becky at her home one evening and we talked about the program. She spoke of Dr. Mullen, and her words echo those of others I heard:

> [Dr. Mullen's] really neat, both [Dr. Mullen] and [another Early Childhood instructor] are really neat ladies. And they're so open to our feedback. Like [Dr. Mullen] says, if we feel that we're overloaded, let her know. And that's nice to know that. And she means it! So if you have suggestions like sharing or snack or whatever, she's open to that. She's *really* nice. So you have some sort of feedback into what's happening to you, which is a good feeling.

The following excerpts from the course evaluations tell a similar story:

> A genuine caring person who is interested in the student and what they learn.
>
> [Dr. Mullen] has a very gentle spirit and genuine concern for her students. I really appreciated her understanding and warmth shown toward me. I also appreciate that she takes into consideration other things going on in our lives that make [sic] affect our learning and performance. Thanks for

> caring, [Dr. Mullen]!
>
> I really felt comfortable with the instructor. I felt that I could tell her exactly how I felt.

Janet also had much praise for her. During one of our conversations she referred specifically to the feedback on course assignments:

> One thing about her as a professor, she doesn't just give you a mark, she tells you. She'll say "this is really good," but she'll also say "there was this that could have been done," you know; so that you don't look at it and wonder why you lost your marks. So in that way I was really happy.

For Leger, Dr. Mullen occupied a very special place and served as an ideal role model. I visited him in his assigned school during the practicum and he commented upon an impending visit from her. At this point he was not particularly enamoured of his cooperating teacher:

> Whatever she says I'll take very strongly to heart, and I'll probably act on it the next day, if not at that exact moment. Because I see [Dr. Mullen] as a very knowledgeful person and she knows where it's at, and I've never ever disagreed with anything she's said. With other profs I've disagreed with some of the things they've said and I've had arguments but [Dr. Mullen]...I've found we're on the same wavelength. So I would take her evaluation a lot better than I would anyone else's.

For all the adulation, however, there was another side to the story. Some students were skeptical of Dr. Mullen's affable demeanour. It was almost as if they believed that someone who smiled and radiated friendliness all of the time must be hiding a darker side. Three incidents come to mind which expose these suspicions.

The one I have chosen to relate first actually happened last; in fact, well after the practicum had ended. I had met with three of the four key informants (Margo, Melinda and Leger) in June to recount their experiences and reflect on the term. Leger had just finished telling us of the experiences of another student teacher in which Dr. Mullen, as a result of certain events, had been labelled as "two-faced." The three of them had this exchange:

> Leger: In [Early Childhood] I sat there and everything [Dr. Mullen] said was just gold.
>
> Margo: Not I. But maybe that's from my past experience.
>
> (I ask Melinda for her opinion on this issue)
>
> Melinda: Well my reaction right at this moment is more along the lines of what [Leger] says...of the fact he thought [Dr. Mullen] was two-faced. It immediately makes me think (at this point she adopts a shrill,enacted voice) of how pleasant she was every day in class and always smiling and we're such great kids and we're going to do so good.
>
> Leger: Now we're able to look back on that and say there are some things that [Dr. Mullen] was talking about that just don't fit, and they're so idealistic.
>
> Melinda: [Dr. Mullen] and [another Early Childhood instructor] both. The program, I think, has flaws.
>
> Leger: Oh yeh.

On an occasion earlier in the term a conversation between Melinda, Holly and Anise hinted at a similar wariness. The students had been discussing proposals for assignment # 1 in their small groups, and some had tested their early ideas on Dr. Mullen. I was sitting listening to Holly, Janet and Edith toss around various ideas when Melinda and Anise approached:

> Melinda: What did she think of your ideas?
>
> Holly: I guess we're on the right track.
>
> Anise: Really?
>
> Holly: What about you?
>
> Melinda: Well, we sort of got (she pauses, searching for the right word) redirected. Like about ninety degrees (laughing).
>
> Holly: But she did it nicely, right? (smiling)

While the indictment is not a particularly damning one, the students have already developed a perspective of Dr. Mullen which includes this mannerism. The person making the derogatory comment (Holly) was not in the group which had its proposal "redirected."

The third incident took place immediately after this class and concerned the same issue. I was walking down the hallway with Anise - a member of Melinda's group - and once we were out of range of the Early Childhood room she cut directly to the core of the problem, as she tended to do on all occasions. Anise rarely wasted time on small-talk or superfluous pleasantry. It was immediately obvious to me that she was upset. She said that when Dr. Mullen had joined their group to discuss plans for assignment # 1, she had "slammed it" (her term). Apparently Dr. Mullen disapproved of their proposal and suggested they proceed in a different direction. Anise felt that because of Dr. Mullen's negative reaction she didn't stand a chance of obtaining a decent mark, regardless of how well the assignment turned out.

At this point her despondency resulted in an overall criticism of negative aspects of the course. She was especially sour about the way in which some students "padded" their file folder in order to make it appear more impressive. Now she felt that she was going to have to do the same thing in order to secure as much favour as possible.

Anise's attack, if it can be called that, was by far the most critical of any I heard during the term. In fact, negative comments of any kind directed towards Dr. Mullen were uncommon or, at least, were not uttered in my presence. Furthermore, Anise was the most likely to react this way. She was very conscious of her marks, and readily admitted it. And at this particular moment she was very upset. To put this into perspective, Anise frequently began each course by worrying about the possibility of obtaining low marks, but this fear invariably proved to be unfounded.

This specific event took place on the fourth day of classes. On the last day I sat with Anise during snack break. Dr. Mullen had passed out a breakdown of overall marks to each student, and most were silently contemplating their results. I had all but forgotten this incident, a fact not lost on Anise. She said she was surprised I hadn't inquired of her grades, then matter-of-factly said that she had done well on assignment # 1 and on the course overall.

Of the course evaluations, only four contained references to Dr. Mullen which could be interpreted as negative. And in these cases students either said they would have appreciated more feedback or greater clarification of assignments.

Based on the course evaluations, student log entries, conversations with students and personal observations, I think that Dr. Mullen was generally received as an excellent instructor and a warm, sincere individual. I suspect that the dissenting comments derive, at least in part, from the friendly, collegial classroom atmosphere. In a setting rife with positive reinforcement, negativity is neither expected nor wanted.

Educational Administration

Unlike the situation with Dr. Mullen, I conducted no personal interviews with the two EdAdmin instructors. The data concerning them are sketchy. In fact, I never felt that EdAdmin occupied the same dominant position in the university lives of the students as did Early Childhood. After all, Early Childhood constituted the career focus of many of these students whereas EdAdmin was just another program requirement. But regardless of its status, EdAdmin demanded much of their attention, and by listening to and talking with certain students I was able to form an impression of their views on the two instructors. And by attending most of the classes I was able to note occasional comments which are revealing in the assumptions they carry, especially ones made by Dr. Colwell.

Drs. Woodward and Colwell. I have already described their general classroom behaviour. Dr. Woodward invariably dominated, frequently adopting an aggressive stance on issues in an apparent attempt to force the students to defend their views and consider alternative perspectives. His manner, while aggressive, was not antagonistic. On the contrary, humour was an omnipresent component of his demeanour. He seemed to enjoy making people laugh. But his voice was loud and he would occasionally meander amongst the chairs to stand in the midst of the students. This could be, and was, intimidating.

Dr. Woodward tended to confine himself in his comments to the subject matter, and it was difficult to develop an impression of his views on schooling and teaching. On one particular day, however, he ran afoul of a few of the students by making comments which they saw as contradictory to the Early Childhood philosophy. He had posed the question of whether university educators and practitioners should tell teachers to conduct their classrooms in a regimented manner. He personally supported the view that teaching methodology should lie with individual teachers. This spurred much discussion, and at some point Dr. Woodward commented that "...people develop in a similar sequence, but they do it in different time spans." There was general agreement on this point and someone took the opportunity to remind us that this was the essence of Piaget's stages of development. At this juncture, Bobbie spoke up, saying she felt Early Childhood courses teach that children learn when they are ready. Dr. Woodward was obviously uncomfortable with this, and spoke mockingly and sarcastically on the topic. Both Anise and Gwen motioned their disagreement with Bobbie, and Anise told us that she thought most of what Bobbie said was directed at kindergarten. But Dr. Woodward added that when children are five and a half years old they move on to grade one. He told us that if he were an elementary teacher he wouldn't want to receive a class of children that had been on totally individualized programs the previous year.

Not only is Dr. Woodward espousing a philosophy which conflicts in some respects with that of Early Childhood, he is adopting, or modelling, a teacher-centered approach to teaching. While in the one course they are constantly reminded, by word and action, that teaching should be a child-centered activity, here they've received a different message.

Dr. Colwell was an interesting contrast to Dr. Woodward, both in physical appearance and classroom habit. Whereas Dr. Woodward spoke in a loud, commanding voice, Dr. Colwell talked in mild, unthreatening tones. Whereas Dr. Woodward joked easily with the class, Dr. Colwell's attempts at humour regularly left him laughing alone.

He was dissimilar to Dr. Woodward in yet another way. He offered occasional "asides" which, taken at face value, betray personally held perspectives on what it is to be a teacher or student. Unlike Dr. Mullen's words and actions they never, to my knowledge, entered into the comments and conversations of the students. For that reason, dwelling upon them at length would constitute a misplaced emphasis. Nevertheless, I wish to recount a few as they reflect the overall emphasis of the EdAdmin course.

On teaching as a career:

> (approximate recall) Many will say: "I'll never be an administrator," because most don't want to be; but you'll wake up some day and decide you don't want to teach grade five until you're sixty-five.
>
> Many people in education by the time they're sixty-five, they're ready to quit.

On dealing with complaints about other teachers:

> (He instructs the class on how to behave if, as teachers, a student comes to complain about another teacher):
> I don't want to hear it! Go tell the administrator!

On the relationship between teachers and students:

> This is a sexist viewpoint, but it's easier for female teachers to show affection than males. Men need to be careful.
>
> Heads and shoulders! Don't pat them on the behind.

On teachers as members of organizations:

> Teachers should know their obligations before they enter the organization.

There were other comments that I didn't record verbatim. He told us that men who stay in the classroom become more cynical; he strongly promoted a return to university for teachers in order to move up the salary grid; he also had us fill in a Pupil Control Ideology inventory, and upon learning that most leaned toward a humanistic approach to teaching, said that we'd likely become more custodial as the years pass. The point I wish to make is that all of this, taken within the context of the EdAdmin course, is a way of lending structure to the entry of nonmembers into a profession and, as such, constitutes a form of early socialization (Wentworth, 1980:85). I was amazed at how frequently students told me that they might not teach more than x years due to burnout. How do they know this? They're told it in courses like EdAdmin, and it contributes to their perspectives of teaching. I noted in my journal early in the term that I had a strong sense of being socialized into a profession while sitting in EdAdmin classes. This was a principal focus of the course: the rights and obligations of teachers, dos and don'ts, appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Student Views. My purpose here is to "paint a picture" of these two instructors as viewed by their students. Many comments were made about the way in which they structured the course and what they did and didn't do in certain situations; but these are dealt with in the next section of this chapter. The focus here is on their classroom presence; their idiosyncracies.

Dr. Woodward, by his very nature, dominated the students' thoughts and, consequently, their comments. At coffee break during the first class I chanced upon Anise in the hallway and asked her for her impressions. She replied negatively: "I wonder if they can keep up with the jokes for three hours?" While I would learn to expect this from Anise, it stood in contrast to comments Melinda and Nancy had made a few moments earlier. Both of them seemed favorably impressed. In Melinda's opinion two factors entered into this: the personalities of the instructors, and the fact that what they were doing was relevant to their needs. Melinda and Nancy caught up with Anise and I in the hallway. Melinda made a comment about how great the class had been thus far. Anise responded (approximate recall): "You think so?" Melinda replied: "Yeh. Didn't you?" To this Anise jokingly chided: "Simple things, Melinda..."

However, Melinda's reaction was typical of others on this first day. Many felt the class was lively, due largely to Dr. Woodward's banter and many believed the course content relevant. Dr. Colwell didn't enter into their conversations on this day, and I had the impression that his presence had been overshadowed.

Dr. Colwell conducted the second class. During the break I asked Jill and Julie for their impressions. Jill seemed put out: "After the first class I thought it would be exciting. I think I've changed my mind." Julie added: "I could have read the book myself." Dr. Colwell simply was not given to extroverted behaviour. He consequently referred frequently to a book or his notes while conducting the class. A couple of weeks later, during our first Conversation, Holly and Janet restated Jill's views, but more diplomatically. Janet said: "It had gone kind of slow. Not that he was boring but just because...it's a long time to sit and listen..." As if to continue Janet's train of thought, Holly added: "...to one person and..." Janet continued: "He was quieter." Holly cautioned, lest I get the wrong impression: "I still liked him, but it was just a different approach." Janet contrasted this with Dr. Woodward:

> He's very blunt I think. I really liked him...as a professor he's really good and he gets his point across. His voice keeps you awake.

By the midpoint of the term, however, a perceptible shift had occurred. Some became slightly wary of Dr. Woodward's aggressiveness. Melinda commented one day: "You don't know how he's going to react." During small group discussion one of the general students, glancing to see if Dr. Woodward was about, lamented: "You don't know whether he's going to pounce or not." Although Becky still enjoyed him, she admitted that he could be intimidating. Its not that the students began to dislike Dr. Woodward; they simply found his behaviour was unpredictable. Dana's comments were telling:

> I like [Dr. Woodward's] approach where he plays the devil's advocate and gets everyone thinking and going a little bit, other than sitting there not saying anything. But I felt a little bit more pressured by him than I did with [Dr. Colwell].

When I asked her if she had a preference she responded: "I think [Dr. Colwell].

Jill also had changed her mind from the first two days of classes. She was more explicit than the others when I asked her if she preferred one over the other as an instructor:

> (laughing) [Yes!] (Dr. Colwell) Probably just his mannerism, his way of dealing with students; a more gentler way. It's O.K. to kid in class but I find that sometimes it's intimidating. A lot of students get very upset about it. Like there was one time in class when I said something and he (Dr. Woodward) shot me down. It doesn't bother me so much; I think: "I can take this or I can argue with you." But then you think: "If he's going to shoot down everything I say why am I even opening my mouth? I might as well just sit here." And so I do. And then that sort of ruins it for me because I think: "I've got lots of points that I could

> raise, but I just won't do it." You know, I think a lot of people - I know...well I won't mention names again - but one particular person actually feels very uncomfortable coming in because several times he (Dr. Woodward) has made mention of something and now she just feels really intimidated; and I said to her, like: "Just don't take it personally, that's his nature." But she can't help it, you know. And I think she's missed two classes already and that's probably why.

Janet and Holly also decided in Dr. Colwell's favour. I asked them during our second Conversation - near the end of the term - if they had a preference for the instructional style of either person. Janet offered: "The quiet one." Holly agreed.

Issues and Concerns

During the six weeks that the students were attending classes, I noted that certain topics arose in conversation or classroom interaction on a regular basis. Others, while not necessarily mentioned as frequently, evoked such emotional response that their importance was obvious. These represent prominent elements in the university lives of the students and have been grouped under the title of "Issues and Concerns."

The Structure of Learning Environments

The concept of structure was one which I encountered very frequently in conversation with the students. It refers, as they used it, to the way in which a learner's time is engaged while he or she is in the classroom or learning environment. A rigidly structured room is one in which a student exercises little self-direction and all of their time is closely controlled by the instructor. Holly explains:

> To me, it's all the kids doing exactly the same thing. All the kids are working on one activity. All the kids would be doing math at one time. That, to me, is structured. They're all doing the same lesson.

For Becky, a structured classroom seemed to conjure up images of a traditional learning environment, where rooms had neat rows of desks and students sat motionless and expressionless waiting to be told what to do. She used the term structure in conversation one day and I asked her what she meant by it: "Sitting in desks, writing." I replied that that's what takes place at some learning centres. She drew a distinction: "But that's your own time. You do it as you want to do it." I took this same question to Holly, asking her what was unstructured about a learning centre. She replied:

> Firstly, the supervision part, there isn't a teacher there saying now: "You will do question one altogether first and then we'll go on to question two, and I'd like you to do the next ten questions on your own, and we'll correct it later." In a learning centre, the child is completely responsible for how much he does, what he does, he chooses what he wants to do. There are going to be things required to be done. It's the child's decision.

Superficially, learning centres came to epitomize an unstructured setting, and desks in rows a structured one. I sat in on a planning activity during one class period late in the term. Nancy, Anise, Melinda and Edith were sprawled on the floor around an elementary classroom plan drawn on a large laminated sheet. The girls were discussing the arrangement of furniture in the classroom. Leger and Dana, having completed theirs, watched our progress carefully from nearby. When Nancy arranged a few desks in rows in one part of the miniature room Leger commented: "How traditional!" Dana, proudly showing us their plan proclaimed: "We don't even have any rows!" Melinda asked: "How do you have it?" Leger responded: "In centres." One of the girls pointed out that ours is a grade one classroom, implying that a total centre approach is not appropriate beyond kindergarten. A few moments later Anise commented: "Rows are yucky."

Although everyone I questioned used the term structure in relation to the use of student time, not the physical room arrangement, rows for many came to symbolize "bad" and centres "good."

Feeny et al (1983) intentionally avoid the use of the structured-unstructured continuum for the very reason that all learning environments display structure, some more apparent than others. Instead, they refer to a traditional setting as a "formal" one, where "...desks, tables, and academically oriented tasks dominate" (Feeny et al., 1983:147). I have chosen, however, to use the terms structured and unstructured because they were used most frequently by the Early Childhood students.

An unstructured classroom was not just an idea belaboured by university instructors through lecture, film or assigned reading. It was something the students lived while attending Early Childhood classes and labs. As I mentioned in an earlier section, there were activities at these centres which they were required to do. But when they did them was totally at their discretion. They initially encountered this structural arrangement the previous year upon taking their first Early Childhood course, and it presented difficulties for many of them. Darla told me on

4

one occasion that the students had written a letter to the instructor (not Dr. Mullen) in which they revealed that they were accomplishing little on some class days and lamented the lack of direction they were receiving. Most had never encountered this approach to learning and were not experienced at exercising the degree of self-direction being asked of them. The problem was still evident this year, as revealed by the following excerpt from Leger's log:

> I think the reason we are having so many problems with assignment # 2 is the freedom aspect. We've never been given free choices before; in fact, it has usually been the exact opposite: "You will have to have this and this and this in this order."

In an earlier entry he described the difficulty he experienced in trying to follow any one centre activity through to completion:

> I spent the independent time getting everything completed. I am too much like an over stimulated five year old - I get started on something, find that something else looks more interesting, so I drop what I'm doing and start something new. This way, nothing gets done!

For Janet and Holly the lack of direction in the Early Childhood classes represented a form of classroom disorganization. Early in the term I asked both of them for their views on the course thus far. Janet responded first:

> I don't know. I feel it's kind of disorganized. There's a lot of work that has to be done but no one knows exactly what has to be done when. You know we have required activities, and know they have to be done, but...

Holly shared this stance, conveying the need for more personal direction:

> I feel that same way. It's disorganized - we don't know...we know things have to be done, it's just that - I know others feel the same way too; everyone talks about it - it's just that...we know it's a learning centre approach, but I feel the need for more structure.

I asked Bobbie about the learning centre approach one day. Her response was the same as many others, and mirrored Holly's comment: "I find that I'm not being given enough direction."

For Holly this lack of direction struck directly at a void she perceived in her own capabilities:

> Another thing about that too is that you have to be just *so organized* to do something like that (Janet interjects: "...well...") - yeah, to do it effectively. I can't see myself seriously being *that organized* - maybe after I've had some experience teaching I would learn the routines, or whatever, I get to know how children are really. Maybe after that, but not right now. I can't see them throwing me into a learning centre approach classroom and having me evaluate children and trying to keep track of individualized programs. Scares me.

Her central fear is one to which Dr. Mullen alluded during an interview early in the term: the loss of control. Holly states:

> I know I'd like to have more structure so that I know what the kids are doing, so that I know that they...like I don't want them to sit in straight rows with me with a whip in that kind of structure. It's so that I know what they're doing. It seems out of control in the learning centre...for me.

An excerpt from Janet's log reveals a similar fear. This entry was made on the day the class saw "Primary

Schools in England":

> I found this film to be interesting but hard to understand (their accent). Again, I feel the open classroom is so "busy" and wonder if it's for me. I really can see the benefits though and am sincerely trying to adopt this type of philosophy as I feel it really works. I guess I'm worried about individualizing instruction in an open environment. What if I miss the problems a slow learner may be having or I don't see the needs of the gifted? I'm not interested in an easy way out - just some semblance of order.

The perceived loss of control associated with an unstructured environment was a key issue for many. During the third Early Childhood class we were engaged in a discussion of motivation and control in elementary classrooms. A number of students related experiences they'd had that pertained to the topic, many based on their first practicum. The general theme of the interaction was that an open environment would be a difficult one. Dr. Mullen was adamant that it could work, especially once the teacher had become familiar with the children. But many of the questions from the students indicated that they feared losing control.

Beyond the personal difficulty of adjusting to the centre approach or seeing oneself employing it, the debate frequently focused on the structure of learning environments for young children. Strangely, here there seemed to be little doubt that most of the students had ostensibly accepted the arguments in favour of self-directed learning. For all her personal difficulty with the openness of the Early Childhood setting, Holly had little problem foreseeing the benefits for young children. She commented first on the dangers of too much teacher direction:

> I think the frustration levels would become very low. The children become frustrated easier and more frequently. With the learning centre approach, if they can't do it they can leave it and come back another time when they feel they're ready for it.

The only real concerns the students expressed for the creation of an unstructured setting for young children related to their progress through the school organization. When kindergarten was viewed as a preparation for grade one, some foresaw problems. This was especially so for Janet. When she referred to the curriculum, and she did frequently, she was referring to the provincially established course of instruction. She explains:

> ...there is a curriculum; they do have to know this by the end of grade one, by grade two... Just taking their interests isn't always...might not necessarily fit into the curriculum. You can't always take the curriculum. I think what confuses me is where you draw the line. Sometimes they say there are things that you have to set out, and yet they go and say: "But always take the child's interest." It's kind of contradictory, I think.

Dana echoed a similar viewpoint:

> I don't think [Dr. Mullen] is teaching us that to let them go wherever they want...they have to be prepared to go into grade one.

After seeing the film "Primary Schools in England," Bobbie asked aloud whether an open classroom in kindergarten would create problems for students moving in a structured system such as ours. Without answering the question, Dr. Mullen asserted that if children are moving into a structured environment they need to have as many years as possible of successful experience beforehand.

There were some in the class for whom the openness of the learning centre environment posed little obvious difficulty. Both Margo and Becky felt secure in this orientation, whether in accepting its appropriateness for young children or in coping with its indefiniteness in the Early Childhood classroom. Margo invariably exuded the self-confidence that let everyone know that she was managing the demands on her time well, even if others weren't. Essentially, she was adept at structuring each situation to ensure that all deadlines were met with a minimum of confusion or fluster. As she said one day: "What you put into it is what you get out of it." The following excerpt from her log early in the term betrays her basic philosophy towards learning environments, a philosophy I would come to recognize more readily during the practicum:

> I feel good about the approach, as the emphasis is on the inner needs and interests of each child as an individual. It really does make sense. Parts of me (the traditional) still see a need for some type of structured lessons, e.g., in teaching paragraphing, punctuation, conversation...

As a student in a university, the polarity of classroom structure from Early Childhood to Educational Administration called forth little reaction from her. She was quite comfortable with centres, but appreciated the change in EdAdmin. She commented one day: "Sometimes it's nice to just sit and be talked to, and not have to think."

In Becky's case the tenets of self-directed learning seemed to fit well with her view of herself as a teacher. This excerpt from her log late in the term reveals the extent to which she claimed to accept the Early Childhood philosophy:

> All I can say is that I'm so glad I am in Early Childhood! The ideas of self-directed learning [and] choice [and] individuality, responsibility, a positive self-concept and care for each other are all right up my alley!! We (early childhood students) sit in EdAdmin class and the generalist students think our philosophy is crazy, but I'm so glad and I know it's not!

With the exception of Becky and Margo, learning centres presented an interesting conflict for many of those with whom I had contact. They seemed to accept the appropriateness of centres for young children, yet at the same time they were uncomfortable with the lack of structure they found in the Early Childhood setting.

Schedule Pressure

The third year is the professional year for the students and the second-term courses are contracted into a six week period. Not surprisingly, many students experienced pressures associated with schedules and deadlines, especially as the weeks passed and end of term neared.

I first became aware of the time pressures associated with a contracted term approximately three weeks into the courses. We had just finished watching a video presentation during an Early Childhood class. Dr. Mullen directed everyone's attention to new activities at various learning centres. She dwelt at some length on one particular activity at the Family/Environment centre entitled "Building Bridges," a focus on communication and involvement with parents. In total, six new readings had been placed at the centres. When she finished the students moved off to begin independent time. Holly looked at Janet, and moaned: "Six handouts! Six handouts!" Janet shrugged and left to begin some other activity. I spoke to Holly, asking if she felt that six readings were too much (a silly question). She seemed very frustrated and close to tears. As they were all assigned for tomorrow she didn't know when she'd find time to read them. She commented that although she knew six weeks would be a crush, she felt this was ridiculous. She planned to speak to Dr. Mullen about it. I asked later in the day whether she had done so. She replied affirmatively and related that Dr. Mullen had promised to talk about it next day in class. [Holly felt this was a way of putting it off but, in fact, the issue was raised and the requirements relaxed].

During that same period I happened to wander near where Becky was working. She asked about my study and inquired whether I was interested in events outside of the university setting. I replied affirmatively. She told me that the past weekend had been so stressful that by the time Monday had arrived she'd felt beside herself. With all the demands on her time - university, family, part-time work - she didn't know how she would cope. It was readily apparent to me that she was experiencing substantial pressure. We didn't dwell on the subject for long because she was preparing a presentation, but as we ended the conversation she said that there was one positive outcome from it all: she was losing weight. [She gave up her part-time job later in the term which eased the pressure significantly.]

Time constraints were a reality for many of the students. During our first Conversation Holly and Janet revealed a way in which they attempted to cope. Both of them concentrated almost exclusively on required centre activities, giving only enough attention to the others to make Dr. Mullen think that something was being done. I had asked Holly why she focused on the compulsory centre activities, and she told me that these were the ones on which their marks were based. Janet picked up the conversation:

> I get so frustrated with them because I think, in themselves the activities are really good and they can be very beneficial - like the LAC - things that you have to learn, even though the assignments we have to do are a lot of work. But our time...everyday our time gets pushed. We need more time, we need more time, we'll do it tomorrow, we'll do it tomorrow. So our time in class is actually spent doing things we have to get done, but the things we actually have to do you do them on your own time; along with your assignments, along with your other class, along with your non-existent social life by now.

Holly continued:

> Well, the thing is too, I've done this *so many times*...is that I go to a centre and I'll read what we're supposed to do, and I'll just take a *shot in the dark* and put a comment down and say that I've done it. I know that's not right and I'm not learning and I know we're expected to do these things so that we'll learn and we'll benefit and if you don't do it then...well, it's really up to you. You're paying the price. I know that, but... Well, there's one centre with a planning classroom. They had the area where you could set up your own little play things. I just sat there and played for five minutes. One of the girls came in and said: "Oh look, [Holly's] playing. It's just like last year." [Janet chides: "Oh, but *think* of what you were learning."] Well, I didn't learn anything from that centre, but I was there - she (Dr. Mullen) came in and she saw me there, working seriously for a few minutes. I know that's bad and I feel guilty about doing stuff like that but if you don't have the time and you're supposed to be getting to those areas... I did a little bit of reading and then commented on that little bit of reading I did.

Holly and Janet's story was not unique. After overhearing brief exchanges and conversing casually with a few students, I began to develop a picture. Many of the students found that dealing with the numerous demands on their time was very frustrating. They felt they had to focus their attention primarily on required activities, which left them little chance to give other activities more than cursory treatment. It wasn't true for all, but for many time was a predominant factor, almost an enemy.

At the midpoint of the term I decided to approach a sample of the students to see how their coursework was progressing. Each was simply asked: "How are things going?" This is how they responded:

> Pam: (approximate recall) I'm getting paranoid! During the first three weeks we really didn't have any information on our assignments. Now we do and it's all coming together in three weeks.
>
> Dana: We have this week plus two more weeks. We have two Early Childhood papers, one paper [in EdAdmin] plus an exam.
>
> Margo: Good. I've done all the reading and am pretty well caught up. (She went on to explain how she feels that she uses her time wisely at the centres).
>
> Darla: (For Darla, time was not an obvious problem. She felt slightly confused about assignment # 2, but other than that things were going well).
>
> Bobbie: (Bobbie felt uncertain about Early Childhood because she hadn't received any marks. Dr. Mullen gave her feedback, but she felt it was the same feedback for everyone). "So it could be a six, and that might be alright

> with her, but it's not alright with me" (approximate recall).
>
> Jeanne: I don't know when I'm going to have time for everything.

Obviously not everyone experienced time pressures, or at least they were able to organize their time so that they didn't encounter problems. It appeared to be a non-issue for Darla and Margo. But for the others, integrating coursework and assignments with other facets of their lives was, temporarily, problematic.

The third Conversation with Holly and Janet occurred after the term had ended. Janet reflected on her experience during the last week of classes. She talked about the EdAdmin paper: "I wrote about three papers. I wrote, and didn't think that would be right, so I did it again, and then finally...I wrote it." I asked how she felt about it in hindsight. She lamented: "Not very good." I inquired about this. She hesitated, then responded: "I don't think it's what he wants. I was under a lot of pressure." From what? I asked. "Everything...due dates...I was getting so mad," she replied. I asked whether the pressure showed itself in any way. She jumped at that:

> Oh yeh. Well, I wasn't getting a lot of sleep. That combined with the fact that I worry a lot anyway. Especially at home...I was really short with people. Everyone else always seems like they have everything under control; it's kind of frustrating. But they don't really, when you talk to them after.

Her comments are all the more interesting because they reveal that part of the pressure some students experience may be created by a perception that others are getting things done while they're not. On the term overall she commented: "I'm glad it's over. It's alot of work in six weeks. I still think that."

Concern For Marks

That grade-point average was a concern to the students was not readily apparent. Most went about their work in a way which, to me, emphasized the congeniality of the class and the general cohesiveness of the group as a whole. In such a setting, references to marks might constitute a bluntness and vulgarity which could mar the otherwise placid atmosphere. Marks were a particularly unpopular topic with Dr. Mullen. She was explicit in letting the students know that she did not like assigning numerical grades, and she would occasionally seek advice from us on how to evaluate a particular report or activity. Furthermore, marks and competitiveness go hand in hand, and competitiveness was something the Early Childhood instructors attempted to minimize by stressing collegial interaction and learning from each other. Marks and grade-point average were simply not encouraged topics. They ran contrary to the ethos of the classroom.

But they were there. In private conversation, overt behaviour and occasional classroom asides, it became increasingly obvious as the term progressed that the students realized there would be an ultimate reckoning.

At first it came to the fore through off-hand remarks by different individuals. For instance, on one day early in the term I was sitting with Holly, Janet and Edith as they discussed possible approaches to assignment # 1. They brainstormed for a few minutes without making any apparent progress. Edith facetiously suggested that they build their project around a "reproduction" theme. Janet said: "Yeh...kindergarten." Everyone laughed, but Holly added solemnly: "Yeh, you'll laugh with four out of twenty."

On another occasion at the halfway point of the term I was seated in the EdAdmin class when the first quiz was returned. As with all other occurrences of evaluated material being handed back, most of the students sat quietly surveying the results. I glanced beside me to where Leger was seated and noticed that he had received sixty-four percent. He mumbled, to no one in particular: "There go my numbers."

The more pointed references to marks came during personal conversations when others weren't listening. Anise's story (related earlier) about having her assignment proposal "slammed" by Dr. Mullen made direct allusion to marks. Being exceptionally conscious of marks, she was very worried at the time about the potential damage to her grade-point average were she to receive a six in Early Childhood, a concern that proved unfounded.

On one dimension marks were viewed as a way of assessing one's progress in class. Verbal or written feedback, while appreciated, was insufficient. The students wanted numbers so they knew exactly where they stood on a nine-point scale. Gwen commented one day during coffee break on her displeasure at having had no assignments in EdAdmin. It concerned her because she had no way of determining where she stood in class. Bobbie also shared this anxiety. She was clearly concerned at having received no marks by the third week of the term. Her inference was plain: if when the marks did come out they were personally unacceptable, there would be little opportunity to improve them.

In the previous section on "Schedule Pressure," Holly mentioned having an almost exclusive focus on required centre activities in Early Childhood. This explicitly betrays a concern for marks. In conversation with Holly and Janet, they made it abundantly clear that their concern for marks was ultimately pragmatic in nature. Marks were seen as the primary determinants of employment. At the same time, marks constituted a dilemma for them, for they claimed to believe that they really weren't an accurate indication of ability. Janet commented first:

> The number marks - eighty-two percent - it is important because they have to... when we go out and they look at our transcripts, in that way, obviously a four is going to look a lot worse than a nine. They're very important in a job situation. But...here at university, I think marks are taken...they don't reflect, I don't think, the ability of the person. It's all competitive. I could get a mark below Holly, and she could get a six and I could get a five. And to look at it, I'm a stanine below her.

Holly joined the conversation:

> The mark doesn't even reflect anything. For example, I got really high marks and she got really low marks. But with teaching, I could be the worst teacher and she could be the best teacher. The marks don't mean... Being a teacher, I don't think is what you put down on paper. It's what you get across to the kids and how you get it across.

Yet, when the final marks for Early Childhood were handed out, Holly turned to Edith and said: "I got thirty-one [out of forty] so I guess I'm happy. But when I think that some marks went up to thirty-nine..."

Both Holly and Janet had difficulty establishing a relationship between academic achievement in university with actually classroom performance as a teacher. Nevertheless, both foresaw the importance of marks. In a way it was like a cruel game: having to perform very well while not believing that the assessments were valid. Holly concluded:

> Marks are important here. That's what people look at is marks. I hate the idea of marking because it's so *unfair*, especially here at university...with all the scaling. You could be in one section and have a certain mark and get a seven, and in another

> section of the same course, when they scale it, you can get a four or a five. I don't think that they reflect the ability of the person at all.

Regardless of their accuracy in portraying a student's capabilities as a teacher, high marks were considered to place one in a better position to secure a teaching job. It was that simple.

All That Is Practical

The prominence of practical knowledge in the minds of many of the Early Childhood students was plainly evident from the first day of classes. They were interested in hints, in building a resource file, in learning "how to be a teacher." The words "practical," "useful" and "relevant" were ubiquitous. Courses and lessons were judged, in part, on the relevance of their content. As stated previously, one of the reasons Melinda was favorably impressed after the first EdAdmin class was her perception that the content was relevant to their needs.

"Practical" was invariably contrasted with "theoretical" or "philosophical." When the terms came up in conversation I'd ask the individuals to differentiate between—them. The answers I received were strikingly similar. During the second Conversation with Holly and Janet the topic of practical knowledge entered the discussion. I asked them what they meant when they referred to something as relevant or practical. Holly answered:

> For me, right now, when I say that I'm thinking of going out student teaching this term, and I'll be able to use that information for student teaching and also for being a teacher.

Pressing this, I asked her how she decided whether something was usable or not. There was a long pause and Janet entered the conversation:

> For myself, if the information is concrete and I can see that it is very practical and I can use it in this way or that way, like a resource I need or something; very concrete. Not some theory.

I asked what she meant by "theory." She responded that it was "...someone else's ideas of some optimal situation that's going to work." Holly agreed.

For virtually everyone I asked, something was practical or relevant if they could see themselves using it in a classroom situation; something that fit their image of what a classroom teacher does. Theory was something someone else said that had an air of idealism about it.

An example of the exchange of practical information was the sharing time during Early Childhood classes. While not everything mentioned during the announcements pertained to teaching, enough of it did to cause Gwen and others to refer to shared items as "recipes." The following examples are taken from the sharing time throughout the term and illustrate the practical or recipe nature of the information exchange during this portion of the class period:

- early in the term Julie told of a book she had recently read entitled For the Love of Teaching. She emphasized that it was practical, not theoretical, calling it a "this is how you do it" book. She added: "This is what you do with kids once you get them in the classroom."

- Gwen one day referred to a recent spate of attempted abductions of young children in parts of the country, and wanted to know how to warn children about the dangers.

- Leger praised a workshop he attended on learning centres. In private conversation earlier he had told me that the workshop contained lots of "practical ideas." He then added: "If we had that sort of learning in university..."
- Denise told the class that she had a binder full of ideas on "celebrations," and that anyone was welcome to it.
- Lynn told of a resource file she had that she was willing to share.
- Dana spoke supportively of a book called Dear Teacher. She told us that it contained letters from parents to teachers.
- Julie told the class about an article she had read which informed teachers on what to put in bird feeders.
- Holly mentioned that she brought a recipe to class for snow ice cream. She added that she had a book of addresses for obtaining various things for children.
- Janet told of a book that she felt was valuable for teachers entitled Teachers Gold Mine.
- Georgie informed us one day about some easy-to-read books that she encountered.

- Julie said that she had recently purchased a copy of a book called Teacher. Dr. Mullen said that she thought the book was out of print, but praised it nonetheless. Julie said there must be a new edition and told where she had bought it. Many noted the address. [I went to this bookstore a few days later and tried to buy a copy. I was told that it was out of print but that they had received quite a few inquiries about it.]

There were other examples. Students were usually quick to note these shared items on their logs or a piece of available paper. For many these formed part of a resource file, to be referred to in the future. Holly commented during our first Conversation:

> ...I've got a lot of ideas but between last year and this year there's been *so much;* the things that they've set up, the things that we have to do, we're free to photocopy things that people bring in; even this year we're having that resources - sharing resources - sign up, bring something in. People can photocopy what they want, and I've got so many ideas from other people. That's something that I really like.

Students would occasionally make reference in their logs to their desire for practical information. Melinda noted one day that she found one of the texts particularly useful. She wrote: "Overall, I really enjoy reading this textbook for it provides practical as well as theoretical information." On another occasion she wrote: "I guess presently I am more interested in obtaining practical ideas for teaching."

Even the course expectations which the students espoused on the first day reveal a practical orientation. For example:

Melinda: to learn program planning on a yearly basis.

Lynn: to acquire ideas of what to do with children.

Pam: to gain ideas on individualized instruction.

Holly: to learn how to help children deal with problems originating at home.

Janet: to learn ways to plan for the curriculum.

Becky: to plan using themes.

Gwen: ways to get parents involved in the classroom.

Glenda: how to prepare for gifted kids.

Mardi: to learn how to deal with the first few weeks of class, i.e., forms that need to be filled out, etc.

The majority of stated expectations for the course had a distinctive "how to" emphasis.

A similar orientation existed in the EdAdmin course. The course content was seen by many as being relevant to the needs of teachers. Students frequently made comments like "this is stuff we need to know," or "this is relevant information." Content was assessed in terms of its relevance.

Words like "practical" and "relevant" were used to assess the degree program overall. By their third year the students had formed perspectives on the usefulness of the material they had studied. Dana commented one day:

> I think we have to take too many courses that could be exchanged for more exposure and maybe more practical courses like the CI's and stuff like that, [rather than] taking a lot of foundations and what not.

I asked what she meant by a "practical" course. She replied:

> CI courses where...not necessarily learning about the curriculum but teaching ideas and...I think the projects that we've done...of all the things in the last two and a half years that we've done, the things that have been most relevant are the practical things we've done. The projects, the actual doing [of] lesson plans and setting up resource files and that kind of thing has been more beneficial than analyzing a textbook.

Leger made a similar comment when I asked him about the elementary program at Highlands University:

> The elementary program in general I don't like because it's far too general and far too philosophical. They don't teach you the basics on "this is how you teach." They teach you - for instance, the music curriculum, they taught us how to play the ukelele and the recorder. They didn't teach us how to *teach* the ukelele and the recorder. So right now my ability to teach music is nil and I hope I never have to do it.

Beyond the desire for recipes and practical information for teaching, there was another dimension to this pragmatic orientation: that which was practical for university students. The world of these students was composed of assignments, tests, schedules, exams, classes and grade-point averages. As the grade-point average was considered to be important for future advancement, students were keen to maximize the possibilities of obtaining acceptable grades. Adding this to the schedule pressures, students made frequent attempts to clearly define and delineate what it was they did or didn't have to do or read. Essentially, they learned to "work the system."

They would inquire about dates for quizzes, or due dates for papers. They'd want to know how much of the textbook they had to read. They'd want to know where they stood in the course, and they were subsequently displeased when they'd received little feedback (in the form of marked assignments) by the halfway point of the term. They'd want to have test and exam content clearly specified, and would ask questions about style of writing. The day after listening to a guest speaker in EdAdmin from the local teachers' association, the very first question asked in class was: "How much of the [professional association] stuff would you expect us to know?" All of this represents ways in which the students went about defining or structuring their situations so as to maximize the potential for good grades. They were defining what was expected of them; they were "working the system."

Problems arose when they were unable to clearly establish these boundaries, or when the information which was provided turned out to be - in their view - misleading. [This was especially true of the EdAdmin quizzes and term paper, and is elaborated upon in the next section.]

On assignments students would take pains to ascertain how to please the instructor. They'd comment when engaged in assignment preparation: "I wonder if she'd accept that?" or "I wonder if that's what he wants?" In Early Childhood the assignments had been clearly (in my view) detailed on the initial handouts. Yet, with every assignment and every new centre activity students would regularly ask for clarification or elaboration. They'd attempt to clearly structure what was being asked of them so that they could provide the instructor with what she wanted. It was almost as if they mistrusted the written word; as if they had to hear it from her so as to avoid any possibility of erring and losing points.

Required Activities

"Required Activities" enters into all of the issues and concerns discussed thus far. All of the compulsory activities in Early Childhood related to unstructured learning environments, so the structure of such environments was an underlying theme in all of those activities; the schedule pressures which students experienced were largely a result of of deadlines for required activities; these activities constituted students' principal foci as they formed the basis of each individual's evaluation; and they constituted the hub of practical concerns, both in terms of the relevance of the content and in their efforts to "work the system." So why establish a separate category when the topic is subsumed under many others? My rationale is that there were comments made in my presence about these activities which go beyond other categories in illuminating the students' world. I can't claim that the topics discussed here don't overlap with others - they do. For that matter, all of the categories are interrelated. But by virtue of their frequency of mention or the emotion they called forth, these constitute issues and concerns, and since they all relate directly to the compulsory activities I have chosen to deal with them under that umbrella.

Early Childhood

Of the three major assignments in Early Childhood, # 2 and # 3 generated a degree of concern. Unlike assignment # 1, which was "university-contained," both of these assignments required the students to visit local schools. In some cases, this proved problematic.

For assignment # 2 the students were asked to visit the school or daycare of their adopt-a-family child in order to assess the program in light of certain criteria they had established. Student concerns first became overt when Holly asked Dr. Mullen to clarify the term "assess" one day in class. Before Dr. Mullen could respond Holly told her, and the class, that she wasn't qualified to assess a school program. For a time class discussion focused on this assignment, and it was apparent that others agreed with Holly. Dr. Mullen said that perhaps she should have used the word "analyze." Melinda told the group that her "child's" teacher reacted negatively to the assignment. She had written the following entry in her log the week before:

> Yesterday evening I telephoned my adopt-a-child's kindergarten teacher to ask if I might come into her classroom for the purposes of my assignment. Initially, she was very receptive of my request. Until, however, once I made the mistake of using the phrase "to assess the program" (as is written in our assignment write-up), she became quick to point out to me that I was not truly qualified to do exactly that. I responded to her by saying that she was probably quite correct and that I did not mean to make her challenged by me. I continued on to inform her that the results of my observations in her class would be merely for the purposes of my paper and ultimately for my own benefit. Following this, she asked if she may see my work as I complete it. Although I replied "yes," the situation that I am now immersed in makes me feel as though I must be both careful and conscious of what and how I use my criteria to evaluate her classroom environment and program for she too will see my work.

Melinda was not alone in her concern. Margo noted in her log that the teacher with whom she was dealing became somewhat "defensive" when she used the word "assess." She suggested to Dr. Mullen that the wording of the assignment be changed.

Holly avoided the problem with her classroom teacher by not fully revealing the nature of the assignment. But there was little doubt that she felt uncomfortable conducting the assessment. She commented:

> I just asked her if she wouldn't mind answering these questions and she said she would, so that was fine. But I was kind of nervous around her. I guess maybe because of the nature of the assignment. I'm assessing a program, and I feel really uncomfortable doing that. Even though she doesn't know what I'm doing, I still feel nervous around her.

This situation caused Holly, and others like Melinda, to renegotiate a view of themselves as students in a new setting. Holly felt that as a student of teaching, and not an experienced teacher, she was not in a position to pass judgement on a school program. I querried her on this:

> I don't feel I'm qualified. I'm not even a teacher yet - third year university - and I'm supposed to go out and assess a program. Two months, or one month of teaching experience behind me!

Assignment # 3 required that the students visit the school in which they would be student teaching in order to develop a prop box. The idea was that they would develop their boxes about a theme of interest to the children, use the box with the kids and note their reactions, and share all of this with their classmates in the form of a presentation. The students were asked to indicate when they wished to share their boxes on a sign-up sheet provided by Dr. Mullen. On the day they were signing up, I asked Janet for her reaction to the assignment. She replied: "It's stupid!

Totally stupid!" I didn't have an opportunity to investigate her feelings further at that time, but made a mental note to raise it during our next Conversation. By that time the assignment had been completed, and this was how she explained her initial reaction:

> Well, because we had to go into the school...it took so much time. You don't just go into the school and look at things and go home - you're supposed to throw it together but we couldn't. No one just threw their box together. As far as I'm concerned I did throw my box together, and it still took me three days, and I was travelling all over the place...asking for things, borrowing things...

In hindsight Janet thought it was a very useful exercise and was glad she had done it. But her earlier comments and worries are revealing because they suggest that a part of the negative reaction to assignments may not be due to the nature of the assignment itself - although this may be a temporary culprit - but due to the fact that it is just one more thing to accomplish in an already tight schedule.

Margo commented on her prop box assignment and again raised the issue of time:

> ...and the prop box was a totally irrelevant time. Like the idea of a prop box is a good idea but [in a hastened voice] "go into your placement, quick-quick-quick, do a prop box... and rush over there and put it into the classroom and rush back."

She was obviously upset by the limited time available for developing the box, and the fact that it required adapting to the schedules of the teachers and children in the schools.

The contracted term was a major issue. Melinda commented much later, specifically about assignment # 2, that it was probably a great paper but the wrong year in which to do it.

Assignment # 1 didn't create the same concerns as the other two, but did hint at two aspects of student life: competitiveness and the desire for practical knowledge. The students were asked to develop a display, provide a handout, and give an oral presentation on a topic relating to indoor environments or working with parents. I noted at the time the presentations were being made that there seemed to be a strong element of one-upmanship. I asked Holly one day how she felt about the presentations. She responded: "Scary! They're really good. It's hard to try and work up to match something like that." This feeling of having to out-perform the others is also evident in Janet's comments:

> I think it's a matter of we all have to do it. No one wants to be first, they don't know what's expected. Now I wish that we had gone sooner, because the more we see the more we feel we have to do.

This competitiveness showed itself in another way. The instructions with assignment # 1 limited the space which the students were to use for their displays. Some people, however, clearly exceeded these limits and in so doing raised the ire of others. After the marks had been handed back Becky told me that Dr. Mullen's primary criticism of hers had been that the visual presentation was too cluttered. This upset her greatly, for she felt that she had made every attempt to confine herself to the space limitations, while others had gone overboard and had not been penalized.

Beyond the competitiveness, the presentations had a very practical value - and not just for the developers. Others saw the information provided by each group - especially the handouts - as very beneficial. Much of this information became part of each student's resource file. Janet and Holly both confirmed that they had gained a number of ideas that would otherwise have taken hours of individual research.

Educational Administration

Whereas the required activities in Early Childhood served to emphasize the elements described above, the compulsory activities in EdAdmin emphasized the frustration and bitterness some felt at being treated - in their view - unfairly.

The two quizzes brought out the most ire. When the first quiz was returned many of the students were upset at what they considered to be the ambiguous nature of true and false questions. Becky commented: "I didn't like the quiz. I thought it was very subjective. There are still questions I'd argue to this day but can't be bothered." Both Janet and Holly thought it was - in Holly's words - "a farce." For Janet, much of the problem stemmed from her indecisiveness in dealing with true and false questions. She explained:

> To me, I debate *everything*. So I get an answer and I go: "Oh, that's obviously true," and I'll write down true. And I'll come back to it and I'll read into it. You've got a fifty-fifty chance...it can't be that easy, that's my problem, so I debate it.

Based on the questions raised in class when the quiz was returned, others also debated the questions and interpreted them in various ways.

Holly felt that the students had been given no direction in the content to be covered:

> For me it wasn't that it was true or false, I thought it was just stupid. They didn't tell us what was going to be on. All the stuff on there was *nothing* we took in class. Not really.

There was a similar response to the second quiz, only this time Janet concurred with Holly about the content. I saw her shortly after the quiz and she complained that, in her view, it was terribly unfair. I overheard Linda comment about the quiz to Lynn one day: "I thought it was ridiculous! Totally ridiculous!" Lynn agreed. The reaction from every student with whom I spoke was the same. They felt they had been mislead, cheated.

The experience of these quizzes caused many of the students to become mistrustful of the final examination. When Dr. Colwell told the class what would be on the final exam, Dana muttered: "But he said that on the last quiz, and look what happened." But when the final exam had been written, there was general agreement that it had been fair. And there was also some finger-pointing. Becky commented some time later:

> Their final exam was good. I could tell who makes up the exam. It's obvious. Obviously the first two exams [Dr. Woodward] made. Seriously! And that last one it was so obvious that [Dr. Colwell] made it, cause you could understand the questions...you knew what he was asking and he wasn't trying to trick you. I have this idea that [Dr. Woodward] was always trying to get us to answer wrong. The questions just seemed to say that.

The major paper in EdAdmin also created problems for many of the students. They were upset at not knowing the topic until the course was three weeks old. Janet commented during our first Conversation:

> One thing about that class a few people were upset with...we didn't get the topic for our paper - and it's due in three weeks - and just because they hadn't organized themselves ahead of time, we're going to suffer. I think because we have so much

> due...and that's one of the things we could have kind of worked on. It seemed as though we just got a topic thrown at us. It almost seemed as if they just picked it out of a hat. And now there's going to be sixty-five people in the class, working on the *same* topic, all due the *same* day.

Furthermore, only one book had been listed as a reference for the paper. And as it was not on reserve, someone had already checked it out. Holly's frustration and bitterness was plainly evident:

> I don't even think the topic is relevant. I'm not going to learn anything from doing it. I'm not going to learn *one thing* from doing the paper. And it's worth how much, twenty-five? Twenty-five percent of our mark!

The topic itself - The [Province] School Teacher in the '90s - was one which many had a difficult time delineating. In Janet's case, the topic required much supposition, and she found that personally difficult:

> For me, they always want to know so much, and I don't know anything. What teachers values are...what they're going through now...and you have to project into the future. I'm not that kind of person, so that topic is really hard to me, to speculate like that.

She was unable to clearly structure the topic in a way which she felt would satisfy the instructors. Consequently, when she did hand it in she didn't feel particularly pleased with her efforts - not because she did a poor job, but because she was never fully certain what was being sought. As she said shortly after passing it in: "I don't think it's what he wants."

Holly's situation was similar. On the day it was to be passed in I arrived at class a few minutes early. Leger, Janet, Holly and Edith were seated at the back commenting on the assignment. Leger had latched onto Holly's paper and was leafing through it. She hastily grabbed it from him, saying that it was poor and made it very clear that she didn't want it viewed by others. After class I asked a few of the students whether I might read their papers. All of them replied affirmatively except Holly. She said that she was too embarrassed by it.

As I left the classroom on this same day I chanced upon Malcolm in the hallway. He was clearly frustrated by the paper and told me that he had had a particularly difficult time writing it. Yesterday he had called Pam to find out what she had written and, as a result, ripped his up and - at 9:00 the evening before it was due - rewrote it.

As with certain of the required activities in Early Childhood, the major paper in EdAdmin created a great deal of frustration for some students. Part of this was due to the perceived vagueness of the topic, and part due to the fact that it was one more thing to be done in an already busy schedule. This was aggravated by the fact that the instructors withheld details of the assignment - most importantly, the topic - until the midpoint of the course.

Anticipating the Practicum

The practicum rarely came up in conversation prior to the posting of individual placements. At first I was surprised, for this was the professional year and this particular practicum - their second - was the longest and the one designated as preferred placement, i.e., lower elementary. Once the placements were known, I promptly realized how important this practicum was in their eyes; it wasn't that they were unmindful ~~of~~ its approach, it was just that their time was fully occupied with academic pursuits.

Beyond this, without actually seeing the school where each was to be placed, there was little substance to talk about, little more than conjecture.

Just before the placements were posted, Dr. Mullen articulated what everyone already knew. And if there were any doubts about the importance of the practicum, she quickly dissolved them by saying: "Your student teaching is what they look at for job placements." She also defined the academic coursework in relation to student teaching, saying: "You can have nines all the way down, but..." When Edith asked whether the evaluation from the first round (the non-preferred placement the previous term) was used by prospective employers - she'd had a somewhat negative experience - Dr. Mullen told the class that they were not required to produce those results. So this was it, make or break.

The first exposure most students had to their placements was in the conduct of assignment # 3. As they came back to the class with their prop boxes, their reactions to what they had seen came out, and many were negative. The students had spent the term immersed in a particular perspective on suitable learning environments for young children. This first look at "real" kindergarten classrooms made many realize that what "should" be is not necessarily what is. On the day before classes ended many shared their stories and the central issue, as always, related to the degree of structure evident in the classrooms. Cathy told of a teacher who would only allow reading and writing in centres designated for those purposes; Georgie told us that while her cooperating teacher was skeptical of "letter days" or "letter weeks" (focusing classroom activity around a particular letter of the alphabet), her principal insisted that she do it; many others said they had seen "D weeks," "R weeks" and "M weeks." As if to mollify the students, Dr. Mullen told us that teachers do these things for one of three possible reasons: (1) they don't know any better; (2) they may be under pressure from parents; or (3) they may be under pressure from consultants.

For some, their first exposure to their placement brought out feelings which bordered on betrayal. Margo wrote the following entry in her log near the end of the term:

> I'm somewhat disappointed with my placement in that it seems quite traditional and boring. My last placement was also traditional, so I was really looking forward to an ECE placement which was really open-ended and focused its program based on the needs and interests of the children.
> On my visit Monday I saw that my kindergarten classroom was not run that way. The circle time lasted for about forty-five minutes where the teacher directed all of the activities and responded very little to the kids. They couldn't have "show and tell" because it took too long. They got to review the "R" letter together and they all got to go to the learning centres to practise the letter "R" and color nice pictures of a rabbit, rainbow...
> I was really disappointed. Perhaps I was too idealistic thinking that all kindergartens were run more open-ended. I did not see any evidence of free play (due to a film). I walked away feeling that the program was run based on the conveniences of the teacher more so than the needs of the children. I'll consider the next eight weeks a learning experience and a CHALLENGE.

Margo's reaction went beyond a disappointment between what she'd like to have seen and what was actually there. It was a case of right and wrong. She commented to Leger and Dana one day in the cafeteria: "When you walk into a room and see one hundred things wrong, you know there must be problems."

Of all the students, Leger's disillusionment was the most acute. Dana told me that he called her one evening, deeply depressed about his placement. He commented to me during one of the last EdAdmin classes: "We're given such high ideals in university that we're not prepared for the real world." He even seriously considered attempting to switch his placement, but in the end decided against it. His-feelings of betrayal, and his conviction to the Early Childhood philosophy, are evident in his last log entry:

> I enjoyed this class, as I always have early childhood classes. I found out though, near the end, that everything we learn is not being implemented in the "real world" (as you know with my practicum placement).
> I think an assignment that you might consider in the future might include having to do a program where the principal of the school demands the use of Basal readers, or worksheets, or something like that that doesn't fit in with our philosophy. Then we won't be as shocked when we enter our classrooms and find these flaws.

Dr. Mullen's response left little hope of this occurring. She wrote:

> We could do this. However, such programs are what you have experienced most of your life. I would rather put my energy into changing what is.

Not everyone was disappointed with their placement, but these students were less vocal. Nonetheless, I learned that some were very favorably impressed and they were looking forward to the experience. Becky was amongst the happiest with her assignment. She wrote in her log near the end of the term:

> I am really excited about my student teaching placement! The school is gorgeous and the teacher is super. I already know what themes I will be working with so I can start planning already!!

For Janet the practicum placement was not a disappointment, but it caused her to focus inward and wonder about her own capabilities. During our third Conversation she indicated she was worried whether she could handle it (the practicum), and I asked her to elaborate on this. She explained:

> I don't know, just the routine. When I walked in the first time I looked around...everything...there's so much! A lot of times people take kindergarten for granted I think. There's so much planning to make it go through - just to keep all the centres going. She does integration and everything. I feel like I don't have enough ideas. She keeps her themes for two weeks. I wonder: "How could I keep a theme for two weeks?" And music...I'm really worried about singing with these little kids.

Beyond the disappointment, self-concerns, feelings of betrayal and, for some, elation, I detected hints amid the conversations as to how students were defining their situations - perspectives they held on what it was to be a student teacher. Others would develop later, but the first and most obvious was a sense of powerlessness - that the situation (the structure of the classrooms they would be entering) was given and couldn't be altered. The implication was not that student teachers *couldn't* make changes to their liking, but that they *wouldn't* if they hoped to emerge with a good report. As Margo commented one day: "I could go in there and change everything and she'd say: 'Goodbye, kid.'" Janet shared this feeling and came directly to the point:

> ...it's hard you know, because you can't go in there and change everything around because you're being evaluated by them. So you cut it...you forget what you learned at university and focus on what they're doing and do it their way.

Synopsis of Issues and Concerns

1. The Structure of Learning Environments

   - the relatively unstructured arrangements in Early Childhood were somewhat problematic for those who felt the need of more direction. While a few claimed to be quite comfortable with this approach, others felt that they didn't use their time as efficiently as they might otherwise have done.

   - despite personal difficulties in adjusting to an open classroom learning style, most felt that this approach was very appropriate for young children.

   - the main difficulties which a few foresaw in the implementation of a learning centre classroom focused on two areas: a. how it would mesh with a provincially-dictated, structured curriculum; and b. personal feelings of not being in control of what transpires in the classroom.

2. Schedule Pressure

   - most of the students felt that the contracted six week term placed undue pressure on them.

- for some, the time pressures created frustrations and anxieties which were directed at various elements of their world, such as assigned activities and, in Janet's case, loved ones.

- due to the limited time, most found themselves focusing exclusively on compulsory activities and giving only superficial attention to others.

3. Concern for Marks

- many students betrayed a strong concern for the grades they received, primarily because of their perceived relationship to future endeavours, notably employment.

- in spite of the practicality of good marks, some felt that the marking system at the university was suspect and that grades were not necessarily a reflection of ability.

4. All That is Practical

- there was a strong tendency to separate practical or recipe knowledge from theoretical or philosophical knowledge.

- course content and class transactions were judged largely on their perceived usefulness for teachers.

- students were very pragmatic in delineating all that was required of them in order to obtain satisfactory grades, i.e., they learned to "work the system."

5. Required Activities

- the two Early Childhood assignments which called on the students to go into the schools created some problems. The "assessment assignment" confronted some with role limitations of being a "student." The prop box assignment created time pressures because the schedules of other people (teachers, children) had to be considered. These problems fostered an initially negative reaction towards them.

- in hindsight the Early Childhood assignments were viewed as beneficial, especially in light of the practical knowledge they generated.

- the quizzes in EdAdmin were generally seen to be misleading and created a distrust towards future such assignments, and a sour attitude in general.

- students were upset that the topic for the EdAdmin paper was not revealed until midway through the term, forcing the need to put it together hastily.

- some considered the topic of the EdAdmin paper to be nebulous, and thus had difficulty coming to grips with what was being demanded of them, i.e., difficulties "working the system."

6. Anticipating the Practicum

   - the practicum was viewed as the most important aspect of the entire program.

   - the first exposure which the students had to their placements brough out a volley of criticism of teaching practices.

   - for some, notably Leger and Margo, there was disappointment with their placements, invariably related to the structural arrangements in their assigned classrooms.

   - in Janet's case, the practicum brought out fears about her own ability to be able to do the sorts of things a kindergarten teacher does.

   - for others, especially Becky, there was joy at having been placed in a "super" situation.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have presented descriptive data on university classroom life as experienced by the Early Childhood students. In addition, six "Issues and Concerns" were identified and described, each of which represented a prominent element in the university lives of many of the students. These issues and concerns related to the structure of their Early Childhood classroom and its appropriateness for young children, the pressures students experienced as a result of a contracted academic term, a general concern for the marks they received in all that they did, a desire and search for "practical" knowledge in their courses, reactions to the activities which they were required to do in order to successfully complete the courses, and their thoughts as the practicum approached.

The next chapter focuses on a selected group of the Early Childhood students during eight weeks of practice teaching at their preferred level.

CHAPTER 5

THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Introduction

Although I had met and interviewed many of the Early Childhood students before joining them for regular classes, I entered the field with no idea which individuals might become key informants. As with many aspects of this study, this was an issue I avoided prestructuring, other than being cognizant of the fact that narrowing my focus would be an eventual necessity. I felt it imperative that I not make decisions such as these until I was in a position to assess the nature of developing relationships between myself and various students. As Lincoln and Guba (1985:256-257) assert, informants are likely to be forthright and communicative only with individuals they trust, and trusting relationships require time to develop.

In addition to this, the two stages of fieldwork were significantly different from each other. During the six weeks of classes the students were together on a daily basis. So I was able to take part in various of their activities and observe them in one setting. Even then, however, I felt it necessary to enrich the data by meeting with two key informants, Janet and Holly, on a weekly basis to explore the many facets of university life.

The eight weeks of the practicum itself presented an added dimension of difficulty for data collection when the twenty-seven students were assigned to numerous schools throughout the city and province. It was immediately obvious that if I wished to explore experiences in depth, I would have to focus on a small number of individuals.

Ultimately, three principal factors influenced my decisions on the number of key informants I would select and who they would be. The first factor I considered was *my relationship with each student*. I wanted individuals with whom I felt comfortable, people who were open and accepting of my presence.

Secondly, I looked at *their placement*. As the primary emphasis in the Early Childhood course was on the structure of learning environments, I selected individuals who had been placed in situations with varying degrees of classroom structure (as I have previously defined it). I was interested to see how they would deal with the "real world."

Finally, I asked myself *how many visits* I would need to make with each informant in order to accomplish what I'd set out to do. I didn't want to "hound" these student teachers, all of whom I assumed were already under frequent scrutiny from cooperating teachers and faculty consultants. The last thing I knew they'd want was another pair of eyes fixed on them throughout the day. Consequently, I decided to visit each key informant in his or her classroom once a week for two or three hours. I'd take care to be present at lunch hour so we'd have time to talk about their experiences, then I'd observe them for an unspecified period of time during the day. We'd also talk in the evening (usually the same evening) over the telephone in order to further explore their experiences.

With the demands of notetaking and ongoing analysis I felt I could see one student each day, and leave one day aside to review tapes or visit other student teachers who might expect to see me. Consequently, I decided to select four key informants. I'm convinced that any more than this would have been unmanageable.

In addition to these four, I continued to meet regularly with Holly and Janet, though I never visited their classrooms. Also, I maintained weekly telephone contact with six secondary informants and tape-recorded all our conversations. Of these six, I only visited two in their classrooms, once each. The data from these conversations, and from Holly and Janet, was used to supplement and enrich that which I collected from the four key informants.

This chapter has been divided into two principal sections. The first is entitled "The Schools," and contains descriptive information on the physical setting in which each of the four key informants worked, and an outline of the way their school days were structured. The second section is called "Issues and Concerns," and is subdivided into major and minor themes. Each theme represents, by definition, a unifying idea which runs through a portion of the data. For example, the first theme, "Role Definition: A Tendency to Conform," was, in Margo's case, created through an amalgamation of six categories which I had identified during the data analysis phase of the study: "Treatment of Student Teachers," "Authority As Student Teachers," "Powerlessness of Student Teachers," "Amount of Teaching," "Decision Making," and "Conforming." In other situations, for any individual, a theme might have been created by the merger of a greater or lesser number of categories. But lest this be misleading, the number of categories comprising any one major theme is of less importance than the fact that, through separate analysis, it proved to be something *shared by all four informants*. This is not to say that each experienced it in a like way, but that it was an issue or concern for all. This, then, is the main differentiation between major and minor themes: a major theme is shared by all, a minor one is shared by two or three of the informants.

I wish to emphasize that in using the designation "minor theme" I do *not* mean to lessen its value. There is as much to be learned about being a student teacher from the insights detailed in some minor themes as there is from those revealed in the major themes. For instance, the minor theme "Student Teaching As Performance" is, in my view, a valuable look into the world of the student teacher. It only arose, however, in conversation with Melinda and Margo. And far from lessening its importance, its absence in Becky's and Leger's experiences is valuable *ipso facto*. In this way we can focus carefully on contextual factors which might explain these differences and enhance our understanding of teaching practica. I have attempted to do this at a later point in this chapter.

The chapter closes with a synopsis of the issues and concerns described herein.

The Schools

Becky

Classroom Description. Becky was placed in a kindergarten in one of the area's newer elementary schools. The design of the school made it look less like an institution and more like a large contemporary home. There is no doubt in my mind that the building was intentionally designed like this in an attempt to reflect, and consequently encourage, a more progressive, positive attitude towards schools and education than older, comparatively mundane designs do.

Inside it was well-lit, bright and comfortable. In place of long corridors with identical rooms along their length, the hallways of this school meandered around uniquely-designed classrooms. The kindergarten was at the end of one of these meanders. Just outside its doors was a semi-circular bench backed by a hall-divider filled with plants.

The kindergarten was actually made up of three inter-connected rooms or, perhaps more accurately, two principal rooms with a smaller, connecting one. The main room - the one where the children gathered upon first arriving at school - contained five large tables. On the carpeted floor was an ellipse defined by numerous strips of masking tape. On one piece of tape was the name of the teacher. On each of the other strips were two names: the name of the child who attended the class in the morning, and the name of the child who attended in the afternoon. This was where the children sat during introductory exercises and many teacher-directed activities.

Along one wall were shelves for the children to place their shoes and other paraphernalia. When I first visited the classroom, the walls were covered with a variety of items, all of which were teacher-made. In the room were a variety of instructional items, such as a projector and screen, and a large piano. There was even a parakeet in a cage. The washroom was just off this room.

In the connecting room was a loft, reached by ascending a well-lit stairway. [I never observed the loft in use. Becky told me later that it lay idle for want of a fan to circulate the air and a teacher's aide to supervise the children.] The outside wall was mostly glass, with a door leading to an external play area reserved solely for the kindergarten children.

The other room contained five tables, one round and the others rectangular. In one corner was a house centre containing a miscellany of domestic items with which the children could, and did, engage in a variety of role-playing activities. To one side of the room was a listening centre complete with an assortment of earphones and a record player. This room also contains a washroom, plus a refrigerator and self storage space.

Time Structuring. There were two separate kindergarten classes each day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Each lasted for two and a half hours.

The first thirty minutes of each class began in the gymnasium. During this time Becky or her cooperating teacher would direct the children in a number of exercises or games aimed primarily at gross motor development. On occasion the children were simply given thirty minutes of free time with the equipment

After gym they returned to the classroom and gathered on the floor for fifteen to thirty minutes of teacher-directed time (circle time). During this period they might engage in calendar activity (reviewing days and months) or sharing time. Sharing time was a form of show and tell; a chance for each child to bring some item from home to show the others.

After circle time the children had approximately thirty minutes of centre time, where they were essentially free to play on their own.

This was usually followed by a short recess, and the day concluded with another half hour block of teacher-directed activity. The children generally had a snack before leaving for home.

Initial Reaction. Becky had nothing but praise for the atmosphere in the school. She was particularly enthusiastic about the principal and described him as "super nice." She told me that all the classes gathered for a thirty minute assembly once each week. These meetings were conducted largely by two students from the upper grades.

All of this - the physical layout and what she assessed as a child-centered approach to schooling - created a positive impression on her from the very first day. She described it this way:

> It's really neat. I've never seen that before [referring to the conduct of weekly assemblies]. The whole atmosphere in the school ... the kids are free to be (slight pause) people. They're not told to sit down and shut up, as you can tell by this room ... it's really neat. It's the way a school should be - fun. It still has rules, it still has structure, but it's fun. The kids don't mind being here. It's just neat to see. I hope that's the way our trend is going.

Leger

Classroom Description. The elementary-junior high school to which Leger was assigned was Catholic, and situated in an inner city area. Unlike Becky's school, there was little chance of mistaking this structure for anything other than what it was. The design inside was the same as thousands of other schools: long, tiled corridors separating functional classrooms.

The kindergarten classroom was small and appeared very cluttered. The space was divided into an assortment of centres and activity areas, an arrangement which I doubt the original designers had in mind. Even with the space limitations, however, there were lots of things for children to do. There was a listening and reading centre, two special interest areas, a religion centre, a language centre (where, much to Leger's chagrin, the children frequently traced letters of the alphabet), a math centre, water play, a rice table, a house centre, an artist's easel and, of course, a carpeted area reserved for circle time. The room was also equipped with a washroom and a sink. While walking through the halls of the school I had noticed quite a few examples of childrens' art work on the walls. This was not the case in the kindergarten. Everything on the walls was teacher-made.

Time Structuring. There were two kindergarten classes each day, each lasting approximately two and a half hours. The first thirty minutes of each class began with opening exercises. This included attendance, prayer, a good morning (afternoon) song, calendar activity and a check on the weather.

When this was done the children had a half hour of centre time. This might either be an open activity where the children visited centres of their own volition, or a more structured activity such as an art project.

The children had a snack after centre time, followed by a fifteen minute recess.

The day ended with more group activity such as music time, finger plays, storytime and a goodbye song.

Initial Reaction. Leger's initial reaction to his placement stood in marked contrast to Becky's. As I've related in the previous chapter, Leger was undoubtedly the most fervent of the Early Childhood students in championing a child-centred philosophy of school curricula and pedagogy. Consequently, he was astounded and disappointed to find himself in a kindergarten where most of the childrens' time was teacher-directed. He was further distressed to learn that his cooperating teacher's approach to language instruction centred on individual letters of the alphabet: letter days, cutting out letters, tracing letters, learning the sounds of the letters, etc. He ardently believed that it was all meaningless. Because of this, (although he did not openly betray his feelings to his cooperating teacher) the tone set early in his practicum was anything but positive. He commented:

> My initial reaction was that (in a slightly subdued voice) this is horrible. Because it's very quiet in here. You know, the kids do not get overly loud and have fun, and play.

Margo

Classroom Description. The elementary school in which Margo was placed, while not as new as Becky's, was much more contemporary in design than Leger's. In many ways it was similar to most other schools, but subtle differences in paint and lighting made it more attractive and informal.

The kindergarten was in a room of average size. It *looked* larger than Leger's, but I think this was more the result of furniture arrangement and wall color than actual floor area. The omnipresent circle area was located in one corner, near the only window. This space was the only carpeted area in the room, and it was where the children gathered for morning (afternoon) exercises and teacher-directed activities. The walls were covered with an abundance of items, once again all teacher-made. To one side of the room was a long counter with a sink and cabinets, and a washroom nearby. Much of the area was arranged in centres, many of which looked like those in the Early Childhood classrooms at Highlands University; two or three tables placed together with partitions in between. There was also a large round table for small group work.

Time Structuring. As with the other kindergartens, there were two classes every day of two and a half hours duration each.

The children entered the classroom ten minutes before things actually got underway. They'd go to the circle area and read by themselves, or perhaps be read to by Margo or her cooperating teacher (or, on more than one occasion, by me).

The first half hour was devoted to circle time and this was totally directed by the teacher. The routine was fairly structured; a few moments with the calendar, then on to the weather; a review of hand signals (telling them to look, or to listen), and a song or two.

The following half hour to forty-five minutes was devoted to centre time. The children could go to various centres, although there would occasionally (to Margo's annoyance) be one or two areas, notably math and language, which were compulsory. Margo and her cooperating teacher participated in centre activities with the children, an interesting contrast with Becky's situation where they merely observed from afar.

After a short recess the children went to the library where they'd be read a story and browse on their own. On certain days each child would select a book to keep for a week.

The day concluded with a thirty minute gym period.

Initial Reaction. Margo's belief in a child-centred approach to curriculum and instruction was similar to Leger's. However, she had a happy-go-lucky facet to her personality which seemed to prevent her from becoming as distressed as he did over the negative aspects of her placement. She quickly adjusted to the fact that, while this was not how she planned to operate her own classroom, this was the way things were going to be for eight weeks and there was little she could do about it. But she told me that she was disappointed at first, and her feelings about the classroom were unambiguous in the following log entry, written on the second day of the practicum:

> I feel that [this] classroom is geared for the teachers. There is not one speck of childrens' work on any part of the classroom walls. I feel strongly that the classroom should be the childrens' room; that anyone who would walk into the classroom would be able to get a feel for the children in the room, because the walls would be full of their work (stories, pictures, writing, art work, etc.). I find that this room has many "lovely" posters and pictures on the walls - but do the children notice them or make

> comments about them? Many of them are not even at the child's eye level. How meaningful are these wall decorations??? I know that this is something I would change in my own room.

Melinda

Classroom Description. Melinda was assigned to a grade one classroom, and it contrasted with the placements of the other three informants in almost every way except one: the walls were covered with numerous teacher-made articles.

The classroom was one that all of the Early Childhood students undoubtedly would have labelled "traditional" or "structured." The children sat at individual desks arranged in rows of two. Melinda told me that a child's placement in one of these rows depended upon his or her reading ability. Thus, some of the rows were for those in the advanced reading group, some were for the poor readers, and the remainder for those who fell in between these two extremes. The teacher's desk was located in a back corner of the room. In fact, the periphery of the room, with the exception of the front wall, was occupied by a series of tables and bookshelves. Across the front was a chalkboard, most of which was divided into special-purpose sections. For instance, one block of space was marked "Agenda," and contained a basic outline of activities for language arts. Another block was titled "Workbooks," and identified assigned workbook pages for the children, depending upon the reading group they were in (these groups were designated by the colors blue, yellow and green). Yet another portion of the board was given to printing instruction. This area was lined like a scribbler page to allow for the neat printing of letters and sentences. [During my visits I noticed that there was a strong phonics emphasis in the language arts. This area of the board invariably had words printed there which were intended to emphasize the sounds of certain letters. For example, during an "o" lesson, "our owls hoot" was written within the lined area of the board. And when "u" was the centre of instruction, one of the word assemblages printed on the board was "uncles use umbrellas."] Another section of the board was reserved for the identification of children who had been assigned to specific tasks: office helpers, room cleaners, library helpers, and show and tell. Most of the remaining space was left open, to be used for any immediate purpose.

As I mentioned earlier, the walls were emblazoned with a variety of teacher-made items. Since this was a Catholic school, I was not surprised that one small corner area was reserved for religious artifacts such as a cross and a photograph of the Pope. [Although the number of schools I visited was few, I eventually formed an impression on the use of wall space. There seems to be a general expectation in the lower elementary grades that all available wall space must be used. It is almost as if this is an indispensible part of creating a healthy learning environment. When children enter these rooms, they are inundated by a multitude of visual stimuli in every conceivable size, shape and color. I can't help but share Margo's questions about whether the kids ever look at the materials, and whether they have any meaning for them.]

Time Structuring. Melinda's teaching day was also more "traditionally" arranged than the others. One significant difference was that grade one students attend for the whole school day. So instead of preparing for a two and a half hour class, Melinda was faced with a school day which was divided into eight periods. While a specialist teacher taught music, and her cooperating teacher retained the daily religion class (Melinda was not Catholic), Melinda, once she assumed a full load, was responsible for language arts, math, science, social studies, health, art and physical education. Most of these subjects occupied a forty-minute time slot.

Initial Reaction. Of the four key informants, Melinda was the only one who didn't react noticeably to the structural elements of her placement. Whereas Margo and Leger were somewhat critical of their situations, and Becky ecstatic with hers, Melinda rarely mentioned the physical arrangement or time structuring of her grade one classroom. She was neither critical nor approving. I was greatly surprised by this, for her classroom stood in such vivid contrast to the Early Childhood ideology. There was no question in my mind that had Leger been placed here, his criticisms of his own situation would have seemed mellow by comparison. But to all outward appearances, Melinda was oblivious to this. Instead, she was concerned from the very beginning with gaining a sense of what her cooperating teacher expected from her and how she would be evaluated. She explained during my first visit:

> I was just more concerned with what I would be asked to do when, and ... What was my teacher like? How would she evaluate me? How much flexibility would she allow me in planning my lessons and things like that?

There was nothing unusual in this. All student teachers attempt to clearly define their situations. But from the start it appeared to be more of a concern for Melinda than for the others. In fact, it became a continuing theme, for she was never able to answer these questions to her own satisfaction throughout the entire eight week practicum.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to an explication and discussion of various issues and concerns which surfaced during the student teaching experience.

Issues and Concerns

Major Themes

Role Definition: A Tendency to Conform

Guinea pigs. That was how Margo described student teachers during their first few days of a practicum. She felt that because they were new on the job the children would try to test them, and since they did not yet know the rules of the school and the classroom, they had to fumble along as best they could. So she likened them to guinea pigs. Of course, this appraisal arose in part as a result of a specific situation in which she found herself during her first week. But, beyond her case, it speaks to the issue of the entry of "outsiders" into an organization - in this instance, a school.

There are no culturally-dictated directives which clearly delineate the "role" of someone who has the "status" of student teacher. We can't say with absolute certainty that all student teachers do this or all student teachers do that. But we can recognize that the use of the term "student teacher" implies a status, and a status incorporates a role, i,e., a set of behaviours (Lauer and Handel, 1983:120-127). That these statuses and roles may largely be structured by individuals in specific settings at specific times does not deny the existence of common understandings.

For Becky, Leger, Margo and Melinda, one common understanding centred on the concept of ownership: the classrooms they were entering were not *theirs*. As such, they were guests, and the status of student teacher was consequently defined as being subservient to that of the cooperating teacher. This was important, for it meant holding in check all the impulses and beliefs which might clash with what they defined as the existing norms of their situations. Margo told me early in the practicum that she had no choice about doing certain things in her room. I asked why.

> (she laughs). I just wouldn't go and say: "I'm totally against it. I'm not going to do it." Like, you have to realize I'm a student teacher. I'm not running the classroom. You don't go into the class and start dictating what you like and what you don't like. There's a lot of things that I would do differently but that doesn't mean I can change it.

In so saying she had obviously defined her role as incorporating whatever her cooperating teacher asked of her, whether she liked it or not. Furthermore, by using the general "you" (as opposed to "I") she implied that she felt her understanding was generalizable to all student teachers; that everyone knows that you don't just enter someone else's classroom and do as you wish, anymore than you would enter someone's home and take charge.

Melinda shared this understanding, and although it snowballed to the point of causing her a great deal of irritation, she felt powerless to do anything about it:

> [Sometimes] I feel frustrated and restricted and ... well, not overwhelmed ... just getting tired of people telling me what to do. Like just having people above you all the time you know, it's not like it's your own classroom. Sure I'm going to be teaching full time, but it's *not my* classroom. There's rules that have been established in there that I don't feel I have any right to change.

Leger also felt this sense of powerlessness in the way he defined the role of student teachers. And, given his dedication to unstructured learning environments, this was a bitter pill to swallow. For his classroom was, in his view, anything but unstructured. Nevertheless, he felt he had no option:

> ... a student teacher ... it's basically, you've got to do what the teacher says. You're stuck. You can't be your own teacher; you've got to do what the teacher says so that you're not looking like you're coming in here and saying: "Well, your program sucks. I'm doing it my way."

Beyond defining the student teacher status as subservient to the cooperating teachers, the students felt that to deviate from established practices would be confusing and possibly detrimental to the children. Becky explained during my initial visit:

> I like to pay attention to how she deals with the kids. Because the kids ... after you choose *the* teacher, she's the boss. The way she does it is the *right* way as far as these little kids are concerned. It's the only way they've ever seen. So you basically have to model your teaching in accordance with [this]. I mean, if it's your classroom and you set up the routine, the rules and the way you teach with the kids, they're used to you and ... you know. So you have to respect that and you can't go doing things differently. So I like to watch and listen to the way she talks with the kids and pick up on how she deals with them because they are comfortable with that and I don't want to make them feel uncomfortable.

At first I wondered whether this was little more than a way of rationalizing compliance with established procedure. But all of the informants told me of instances where children were quick to speak out when their student teacher inadvertently strayed from the standard routine. On some occasions I observed this myself. The children in Melinda's grade one classroom told *her* how she was, and wasn't, to mark their assigned work and Becky's kindergarten kids informed *her* how "show and tell" was to be conducted. Becky subsequently told me that kids are "really set on rules" - they don't like having a familiar schedule altered. Leger told of mistakenly changing the pattern of morning exercises one day by starting the morning song before saying the prayer. The children interrupted him to say that things weren't done that way. He tried to save face by asking if it was alright for just this one day. Most went along, but even then some adamantly began reciting the prayer during the song. He didn't deviate again.

In addition, Leger was concerned that change would lessen the children's self-esteem. He told of doing a phonic routine with the class where he showed the letter of the day and they made the sound. It concerned him that the children frequently made the sound *before* the letter was visible. He briefly thought of changing the order but was fearful that the children would think that what they thought they knew yesterday they didn't know today. So impact of change on the children was a major concern for him.

A third factor was also influential in convincing some to stay with an established structure: evaluation. I asked Leger one day why he didn't modify some of his cooperating teacher's practices which I knew irritated him. He responded:

> Because they're evaluating you. If they don't like you they're not going to give you a good evaluation no matter how good you are. That's the sad truth but I think that is the truth. You talk to people who've gone through it before and people say: "Well, I've had a conflict of interest with my teacher." And it shows on their final evaluation.

So the students defined their roles according to established practices in the classroom and explicit or implicit expectations of their cooperating teachers. They viewed themselves as guests and outsiders in another person's domain, and therefore felt obliged to observe existing custom. Furthermore, they felt that to deviate substantially would be confusing and disruptive for the children. And they rationalized that getting a good mark meant doing as the cooperating teacher did. None of them had any illusions about the importance of this particular practicum.

All of this, of course, resulted in a strong tendency to conform; to put one's own ideas about classroom practice aside and stay with an existing pattern. I don't mean to imply that their individuality didn't show through, for surely no role exists entirely independent of its occupant. But their personal views were, for the time being, largely suppressed.

This conformity took a number of forms throughout the eight week practicum. In a general sense it meant abiding by the established routine of the classroom; for example, none of the student teachers made any attempt to reorder the timetable, even in a minor way.

In more extreme cases, compliance involved actually adopting some of the cooperating teacher's idiosyncracies. Becky regularly reminded the children that one hand should "babysit" the other, as a way of having them keep their hands to themselves. When dismissing them from circle time she commonly adopted her cooperating teacher's habit of doing it by color of clothing. She would call out: "All those wearing ... green," and any child who could find a smidgen of green was off in a flash. And so on until everyone departed. When going from the classroom to the gymnasium she had the children walk in single file to prearranged "stations" and wait. They would walk from the room to a corridor doorway, then to the office, then on to the gym. At each "station" they would stop and wait until she told them to move on. During the class she reinforced appropriate behaviour with comments like: "What good children," or "Aren't they being good?," or "Isn't this good work, Mr. MacKinnon?" Positive reinforcement was ubiquitous in her room. To get their attention she said: "Does everyone have their listening ears on?" Her cooperating teacher didn't write daily lesson plans, so neither did Becky. All of these mannerisms were copied from her cooperating teacher. Becky felt comfortable doing this because of her admiration for her teacher and because the children were accustomed to it.

Melinda also adopted some of her cooperating teacher's habits, though I suspect in her case it was more a result of perceived expectations and concern for evaluation than admiration for the teacher. When she wanted the kids to repeat after her she would say: "Be my echo." When a child's turn for show and tell approached, she would give him or her a yellow card to take home as a reminder to bring something to class the next day. She also copied the system of using stars for grading work which was all correct.

Leger tended to view conformity not so much as a complete abandonment of his own ideas about teaching, but more as a temporary forging of those ideas to fit someone else's cast. He commented:

> It's more bending to mold yourself into the mold that the teacher has. And you have to take your philosophy and your ideas and mold them into what she's got.

None of the student teachers were willing to challenge their cooperating teachers in circumstances where they opposed a particular technique or principle (although some did eventually attempt to instigate subtle changes, as I've elaborated in a later section titled "Subtle Modifications"). In some instances they didn't feel sure enough of themselves to make an issue of something. In other situations their status as student teachers caused some to question their competence. Margo was particularly sensitive to this, telling me that she felt "like a student." For her this involved a sense of not being in control and a tendency to question her own capabilities. I found this interesting - especially in Margo's case - for she had worked in a professional capacity with children in a preschool setting for a number of years prior to entering university. Few of the other Early Childhood students had this sort of experience. So, for her, *being* a student implied *feeling like* a student. She told me one day: "I think until I'm not a student I'll feel like a student." Near the end of the practicum she wrote in her log: "I still don't feel 100% comfortable at all times. Perhaps because I know that I am playing the role of a student teacher." And even when she did feel certain of herself in her opposition to some aspect of classroom practice, she usually chose to comply rather than make an issue of it. In her words:

> You just kind of learn to bite your tongue or play along. It's not worth the time and effort to make a big deal out of things that I don't feel comfortable with.

Even in Becky's case, in which she developed a warm and friendly relationship with her cooperating teacher, she chose not to confront her on the rare occasions when she found herself opposed to some detail of pedagogy. Furthermore, she made it abundantly clear that even if she was opposed to *most* of what her cooperating teacher did, she'd play along.

Playing along did not come without a price, especially as the term wore on. Margo found herself becoming more and more resigned to doing just as her cooperating teacher asked without even so much as a murmur of discontent. During my last visit in her eighth week she told me of the details of a spider unit she was doing. She said that her cooperating teacher had suggested a number of ideas that she might incorporate into the unit. Margo commented, almost smugly:

> Well, you know what I'm going to do? Exactly that! Because I know that's what she expects. And I probably could get away with a *little* bit. But if I said: "Scrap that. I'm doing something totally different," I don't know if she'd feel good about it, and I wouldn't even do it.

Melinda's comment, quoted previously, is worth repeating, for it conveys her feelings of resentment at having to conform rigidly to someone else's expectations. This comment was made during her fourth week:

> [Sometimes] I feel frustrated and restricted and ... well, not overwhelmed ... just getting tired of people telling me what to do. Like just having people above you all the time, it's not like it's your own classroom. Irregardless, sure I'm going to be teaching full time, but it's *not my* classroom. There's rules that have been established in there that I don't feel I have any right to change.

I was not surprised to find that Leger had the greatest feelings of constraint regarding his situation. He was decidedly unhappy with what he saw happening to himself as the weeks passed. During the fifth week I asked him if he had experienced any conflict situations. He replied:

> The usual. Doing things I don't like doing, like doing the letter "R." I'm thinking this morning I came in just like a robot and changed the letter of the week and got out the stuff and thought about how I was going to do the letter "R." And it didn't even strike me as : "God, this is horrible," until after awhile I thought: "What am I doing?" I'm doing this just ... I'm not

> even thinking about it anymore. I'm into this rut where ... I'm doing it, and it scares me.

Conformity was a fact for the student teachers throughout the eight week practicum. Whether for reasons of status, or out of concern for the children, or as a result of a pragmatic self-interest in a good evaluation, all of the key informants felt obliged to abide by the rules and procedures which existed in their classrooms. This meant following the established schedule, maintaining the existing structure, and even, in some instances, adopting certain of their cooperating teachers mannerisms. None of them would argue that the experience was a waste of time. All felt it was beneficial in various ways - some more so than others. But at the same time, all of them viewed the practicum as an artificial teaching experience in some ways. With the possible exception of Becky, none felt that they could truly be themselves as teachers as long as they were constantly being scrutinized and asked to perform in a setting that wasn't *theirs*. Perhaps Margo was not being too harsh when she described student teachers as guinea pigs.

Secondary Informants. Conformity was also an underlying theme for all of the eight secondary informants, although some were more conscious of it than others. [Note: There were actually *six* students with whom I maintained regular telephone contact, but I've included the Conversations with Holly and Janet in this category for convenience.]

During numerous Conversations with Holly and Janet, Holly, in particular, disapproved of much that went on in her classroom, but felt that she was obliged to comply with it anyway. She was critical of lessons which focused on individual letters of the alphabet and frequently referred to them as "stupid." She saw little value in worksheets and indicated that she would not have them in her classroom.

But, in spite of all this, she was loath to confront her cooperating teacher with her objections. She told me: "I just do what she tells me to do and everything's O.K." And when I'd question why she was doing things to which she objected, she'd typically respond: "Because that's what [my cooperating teacher] has set out for her plan for the year so I have to do it." It was as if there were no other possible answer; as if the question was silly. She said that her teacher had been quite clear on how the lessons were to be done: Holly was to watch her (the cooperating teacher) in the morning and then do exactly the same thing in the afternoon.

There was little doubt that evaluation was at least one of the reasons why she tended to conform. Referring sarcastically one day to a lesson on the letter "N," she said: "I did it exactly as she did it." Janet, who was seated across the table from her as we talked, made a symbolic gesture which, she explained, meant "brown-noser." Holly responded defensively: "Listen, I want to get a good mark. I don't have any choice."

For Janet the pedagogical conflict which Holly experienced was less apparent. She hadn't "bought into" the Early Childhood philosophy on open classrooms to the extent that many of the others had. Consequently, she tended to side more with her cooperating teacher's way of doing things. Nevertheless, it was apparent in the way she spoke of her experience that she stayed strictly within the established structure of her room even though she might, under different circumstances, have deviated somewhat. She told me that she was very conscious of her actions when her cooperating teacher was present and that she was always wondering whether she was doing things "right." But, whenever her teacher was away and a substitute was brought in, Janet felt relaxed and claimed "you can do whatever you want."

The experience of many of the others was not dissimilar. Cathy told me at the end of her second week: "I'll do what she says. She's the person who gives me my mark." But Cathy also told me that she *knew* what was most effective for young children and that she would do things differently in her own classroom. She held very firm views on appropriate pedagogy, and was not afraid to speak her mind to her cooperating teacher. Yet, through it all, she said that she didn't want to cause "too much trouble." She had no delusions about her status and clearly defined herself as a student and thus subservient to her cooperating teacher.

Jill also felt that if it were her room she'd make a number of changes. But, "I don't want to push anything." She stated what everyone else stated: "It *is* her class." And again, when I'd ask why she did things she felt uncomfortable doing, she'd reply: "Because...my mark depends on it."

Gwen said that while she had a very supportive cooperating teacher, she frequently found herself wondering whether the lessons she was planning would be acceptable.

Anise lamented: "You can't switch the whole program. I can't completely change it." On one occasion we talked about the emphasis placed on alphabet letters by her teacher: "What can you do? It's there so what can you do?" And she added a statement that was becoming all too familiar: "... it's her classroom. I'm just the student teacher. I'm there to learn from her."

Mardi commented early on that she would alter the organization of her classroom if it were her own.

Dana didn't readily see any conflict between her situation and the Early Childhood teachings on open education, even though there was a considerable amount of structure (in my opinion) present in her room. She had a very close relationship with her cooperating teacher, since she'd known her before, and she tended to abide by the established routine. She told me early in the practicum that she was *supposed* to complete one letter and one number each week until Easter and she confessed that she often chipped away at centre time in order to accomplish this.

The Cooperating Teacher: A Focal Position

There was never any doubt about the centrality of the cooperating teachers during the practicum. Some were the focus of much criticism for the ways in which they practiced their trade or dealt with their student teachers; others were regularly praised for many of the same reasons; all - though some more so than others - contributed to the development of their student teacher's self-esteem and view of themselves as teachers. All four of the key informants considered that a healthy relationship with their cooperating teacher was a critical factor in making the experience a good one. While each relationship was unique and clearly contextual, the cooperating teacher was very much a part of the daily life of each student teacher. They had a direct effect through their words and actions, especially in their assessment of teaching performance. They were also indirectly able to affect each experience by the ways in which they had structured the classroom environment. For this was the mold (to borrow Leger's term) into which each student stepped, and which served as a framework for the entire eight week practicum.

The Relationship. As I've related earlier, each student fashioned a relationship with his or her cooperating teacher which was unique. And in each case, the nature of the relationship could be captured in one key word: Becky -

friends; Margo - factual; Leger - hurried; Melinda - professional.

Relationships develop over time. While each individual in an association contributes to the way in which it is defined, I don't think there is much doubt that the principal shapers of these particular relationships were the cooperating teachers, given their positions of authority. In Becky's case, her "bubbly" nature undoubtedly influenced the direction of their relationship, but the willingness of her cooperating teacher to allow and encourage this type of association to blossom was a critical factor. Similarly, Melinda's cooperating teacher (and to some extent Margo's) defined their relationship more as a teacher-student or master-apprentice one. I don't wish to imply that they were not on friendly terms - they were. But it was more a professional friendliness, one confined to the workplace. When I entered Melinda's classroom there was never any doubt in my mind as to who was the principal authority, whereas in Becky's room this distinction blurred.

Becky told me that she and her cooperating teacher became friends on the second day. There is no rational reason which I can offer for this other than to say they just "hit it off," although they did share certain similar burdens in their personal lives which likely contributed to their attraction. By the third week of the practicum Becky described her relationship with her cooperating teacher in this way:

> I like the way she teaches. I like the way she deals with the kids. We got to be really good friends. We're going to take a dance class together. We get along really well. And she made copies of her *whole* Easter unit. Remember I said she was going to do that? It's about this (motioning with her hands) thick! I mean, even stuff we're not going to be using.

Their relationship created a very relaxed classroom setting. I did not witness a situation where Becky was teaching and her cooperating teacher was scrutinizing her. The master-apprentice relationship was overtly missing. Becky likened it more to a team approach:

> If she's walking around ... like, one little girl brought a little wooden bird for show and tell today and she showed it, and [the cooperating teacher] was walking through and I said: "Oh, Mrs. ________, look at this." So, it's really relaxed. It's more like we're a team rather than her teaching me how to do it.

Margo didn't describe her relationship with her cooperating teacher in the same way. They got along well without a doubt, but the master-apprentice relationship was more readily apparent. It lacked the personal elements which characterized Becky's. I asked Margo about their relationship one day, and this is how she responded:

> I wouldn't say really close. But, I think quite honest and factual. Like she gives me some really factual feedback. A lot of it's just typically dealing with the room and the class and there's not a lot of personal ... Yeh, but very practical. She tends to sit down usually everyday or as much as she can to give feedback or to give suggestions. So, I'll ask her questions ... so, in that sense, she's really open. I feel really comfortable asking her any kind of question or asking her for personal feedback.

Leger's relationship with his cooperating teacher was strikingly different from that of the others. It can't be likened to Becky's, although they got along well together; nor can it be compared with Margo's, for he never received the sort of attention or tutoring from his cooperating teacher as she did from hers (which he regretted). He described it as "hurried:"

> We get along O.K. The best words to say would be "busied" or "hurried," because she's always on the run. So we catch glimpses and pieces of each other here and there. We haven't sat down very often and talked.

I asked him if this concerned him. He told me that that would depend on his mid-term evaluation. If it turned out well, he'd feel they were on the "same wavelength," even if they talked little. If it turned out to be a surprise, he'd wonder why she hadn't discussed problematic issues with him previously. [The evaluation was a good one.]

Yet, I could sense that he wasn't fully satisfied with their relationship. The following quote comes from a disussion we had during his fifth week (after he'd received his mid-term evaluation). It subtly emphasizes his dissatisfaction:

> I was really scared last week when I was getting evaluated, because she left two spaces blank and said: "I haven't done those yet because I haven't seen your logs, so I don't know what you've been doing in that." And I'm going: "Oh my God! She can't see my logs. If she sees my logs I'm sunk." And I would hope as a cooperating teacher that I would never have my student teacher thinking that.

She never did see the logs.

I've previously identified Melinda's relationship with her cooperating teacher as "professional." I use this term to try and capture the essence of the master-apprentice association. Melinda taught, and her cooperating teacher invariably sat at the back of the room listening and observing, even if she was busy marking or otherwise occupied. She provided written feedback on most lessons. But Melinda was never really able to assess where she stood in her cooperating teacher's eyes, even though she described their relationship as "nice." The following comment arose in a discussion we had during her fourth week and in many ways typifies the mixed signals Melinda felt she received throughout the eight weeks:

> The other day she said to me: "Oh, you've been doing such an *excellent* job. Don't you give up. You're showing so much progress." And today she says: "I'm *so* happy to have you. You don't know how happy I am to have you." And then I have this report that just says I'm (in a curt voice) "good."

Criticizing the Cooperating Teacher. Critisism came often in some instances; particularly from Margo and Leger. Yet neither of these individuals had a fault-finding character. But both were strong adherents of a child-centered approach to pedagogy and curriculum, and thus saw fundamental "flaws" in aspects of their situations. Melinda's criticisms frequently centered on the ambiguity of her situation - never being totally sure of herself. Becky also favored a child-centered pedagogy, but she seemed able to reconcile problematic aspects of her situation by reasoning that what worked for her cooperating teacher was fine with her (Margo tended to do the same). Furthermore, after the first week I only ever heard Becky criticize her cooperating teacher once. She claimed that they saw eye to eye on most issues of pedagogy. Whether this was the case, or whether their flourishing friendship caused her to gloss over areas of disagreement, I don't know.

The first week of student teaching was like the meeting of two solitudes for this was when the students entered the "real" world of teaching and left the "protected" environment of the university. Everything that they'd learned, especially in Early Childhood, came into contact with teaching in actual practice. Since Dr. Mullen had fashioned the course to represent the practice as she *wanted* to see it, conflict was inevitable.

Not surprisingly, Leger was the most critical. His first reaction was to describe his situation as "horrible." He felt that children need an environment where they can play and have fun (based on the premise that children work by playing), and he didn't see this happening. In addition, there *were* centres in the room but the children rarely role-played in them. This discouraged him. He particularly disapproved of the "letter of the week" and the strong phonics emphasis in language arts for he believed that none of this was internalized by the childen and that it had no meaning for them. But perhaps what galled him most was the fact that he felt obliged to abide by all of this for the entire practicum.

Margo was also critical of many of the structural elements present in her setting. She felt that circle time (teacher-directed activities) was too long. She disapproved of the letter of the week because to her it exemplified a teacher-centered (as opposed to a child-centered) approach to instruction. The crux of her disparagement, though, was the character of the classroom to which she'd been assigned. She felt it was a "teacher's room." She lamented during her first week:

> When I look around, do you see any kid's artwork? Anywhere? No, look there, there, there, all around (points to various places). The first time I walked in here I thought: "This is a teacher's room, it's not a kid's room, it's a teacher's room." And I would have my kindergarten - it'd be a kid's room.

Margo was also critical of certain aspects of the way in which her cooperating teacher defined her role, and she felt this influenced their relationship. For instance, she told me that her teacher never asked for any input from her when they were discussing lesson plans. Margo mentioned the word "dictator" when she was describing her cooperating teacher and the way she used her authority to direct Margo's plans and activities. Her cooperating teacher would invariably say something like: "That's a good idea, but maybe we'll do it this way..."

Melinda rarely criticized any of the structural elements in her classroom. The only time she commented negatively on an aspect of teaching practice was to voice her disapproval (to me) of the way her cooperating teacher selected children to hand out notebooks. She felt it gave more opportunity to some than it did to others.

When she did criticize, her criticism almost always focused on the way she was treated as a student teacher. On one day (while I was present) Melinda mistakenly directed the children to undertake a certain activity in a way which contravened established classroom practice. Her cooperating teacher stood up and told the children to do it in another (proper) sequence. Melinda was especially sensitive to this and felt it would have been more appropriate for her cooperating teacher to speak to her privately and allow her the chance to right the situation, rather than correcting her in front of the class. She wrote in her log that evening that if this sort of incident were to happen regularly "...the children will begin to run to her (the cooperating teacher) to see if my directions are really O.K. to obey by."

By the third week, Melinda had decided that the practicum was not evolving as she had hoped it would. She commented:

> I expected this experience to be very enriching for me in that my cooperating teacher would provide me with a lot of ideas. Well, so far, I've been providing the ideas. Anything that she's done hasn't been something new to me that I really

> thought: "Wow! I should try that." The things that I had to find for Easter I've been pleased with. But I had to find them myself.

By the fourth week she was openly bitter about the way her cooperating teacher (and faculty consultant) made her feel as a student teacher. She explained:

> (irritated) When both my faculty consultant and especially my cooperating teacher continuously point out to me that once I get a full teaching load it's going to be so hard and so heavy and so time-consuming ... They make me feel like: "You're so inexperienced and so immature. You're probably going to fall flat on your face and we're going to have to pick you up. You just don't *realize* what's ahead and what occupation you're trying to get yourself into." Rather than giving me encouragement, it's like: "Hah! Do you think you're going to be able to make it?" And that I just detest. I've heard and seen it over and over.

Becky's criticisms of her setting, as I've mentioned earlier, were virtually confined to the first week. I visited her on her first day in the school and she quickly isolated everything about the classroom which did not meet with her approval. Her comments were delivered in a matter-of-fact manner; she was not derogatory. She felt that physical education occupied too much time (thirty minutes); that by its very nature it need to be fairly structured and that this was too long for a structured activity. Conversely, she felt that the thirty minutes devoted to centre time was too short. She also remarked that there was a need for more of an emphasis on nutrition, a lot of wasted space in the classroom, and a lack of children's work on the walls. Here, her critique resembled Margo's; they both felt that the classroom was primarily geared to the teacher. Becky commented:

> I think it's just a matter of ... she seems like (in a subdued and questioning tone) she likes to do things the easy way, which is fine. I mean, if you've got kids at home and whatever, you know. If she just wants to come here and do her job ...

With this exception, I never heard her speak critically of her cooperating teacher again.

Praising the Cooperating Teacher. When anyone praised their cooperating teacher they usually focused either on a special human quality or an aspect of pedagogy.

Becky was by far the most complimentary when she spoke about her cooperating teacher. She always had something kind to say about her. Becky was immensely happy; she was experiencing no major discipline problems, and she had a very close relationship with her cooperating teacher. Furthermore, she was in a very well designed and well equipped classroom. Whenever I asked her how things were going, the answer seldom varied:

> Everything I do here ... I think it's just the basic atmosphere, the teacher. Really, like she's super. She is. She even told me in my first year of teaching she'll help me out by writing out ... giving me copies of her lesson plans and unit plans and everything. So all I have to do is make the materials. Like she said, I'll have enough to do for my first year of teaching. Now, that's a really nice lady.

Margo also complimented her cooperating teacher. Although she didn't concur with many structural elements in the classroom or appreciate her teacher's dominance in discussions, she was able to isolate certain qualities which she considered praiseworthy. For instance, she felt that her "affective" emphasis in dealing with the children was especially commendable. She commented:

> She puts a lot of emphasis on feelings and things that are being kind. Things that are really rude, she uses the term rude. So I think she really is trying to make the children aware what they're doing is affecting others. She does that constantly and uses the instances that happen.

She also felt that she personally gained from the practicum experience. She considered her cooperating teacher excellent, and described her as having a "unique quality."

Leger didn't have a lot of praise for his teacher, though this must be understood in context. As he related earlier, they didn't have a close relationship, either as friends or as master-apprentice. Leger was left largely on his own, and the majority of the feedback he received came through infrequent formal evaluations. He offered the most praise during the first week, at a time when he was teaching only occasionally and was getting accustomed to his situation. He commented during my first visit:

> She's very warm and open, and she's helping me a lot, and she gave me a lot of feedback after my first day. And it was ninety-nine percent positive. Any criticism she gave was in a way that's saying: "You did *great*, but these kids work better with something like *this*."

During the second week he told me that a provincial Early Childhood consultant had visited the classroom and had spoken with his cooperating teacher about the overuse of worksheets. Since then she had reduced the number of worksheet activities, spurring Leger to quip that "there's hope for her yet."

He was also particularly impressed with an arrangement called "small group day" that his cooperating teacher had worked out with her Local Advisory Committee. Once a week one day was set aside when most of the children would stay home and only a designated few (three or four) would come to school. They would engage in a variety of normal classroom activities, but would receive more individual attention then when the whole group was present. Leger was very complimentary of this, and claimed that, if possible, it would become standard practice in his own classroom.

Melinda rarely commented on her cooperating teacher either as a person or as a teacher. On one occasion she did refer to her as "nice," but added little else. Unlike Becky and Margo, she and her cooperating teacher seldom worked together, either in lesson planning or instruction. Melinda spent countless hours at home preparing her lessons. Then her cooperating teacher would review them each morning, and Melinda would go into the classroom and teach them. Afterwards, her teacher usually commented on how she had done. Melinda had not spent a lot of time observing her cooperating teacher in the early weeks of the practicum and because of this had little to say about her pedagogical skills. [Melinda began teaching one or two subjects early in the practicum, and when she wasn't teaching herself she left the room to work on her lessons elsewhere in the school].

As I stated at the beginning of this section, each student forged a unique relationship with his or her cooperating teacher. By isolating the "cooperating teacher" as a major thematic category, I do not mean to imply a uniformity of the four experiences because the circumstance of each particular setting (the people involved, structural factors in the classroom, etc.) contributed greatly to the way in which the experience evolved. The point I *have* attempted to make is that the cooperating teacher, however she was experienced, was central to each person's daily circumstances. She was *there* either directly in physical presence and verbal interaction or indirectly in the structuring of each student's daily experiences. And she was defined by each student teacher as "someone who counts."

Missing from this section is an exploration of the sort of evaluative feedback the students received from their cooperating teachers. It could easily have been incorporated into this discussion, but since evaluation was defined by the students as important in and of itself, I decided to deal with it in a separate section (see "Evaluation: Under the Microscope").

Secondary Informants. While I spent much less time exploring the centrality of the cooperating teacher with the secondary informants than I did with the key informants, the way the students defined their relationships with their teacher came through in conversation and left little doubt in my mind about the impact cooperating teachers had upon each individual's experience.

I will try to briefly outline how most of the student teachers felt about their relationship with their cooperating teacher, and how it shaped their experience.

Holly referred to her cooperating teacher as "nice," and said: "we get along pretty well." But she wasn't pleased with the way her early role came to be defined. Unfortunately for her, the teacher's aide was ill for a while, and Holly was "slotted into" that position temporarily. So instead of observing and teaching, she found herself making coffee and tea frequently, or being sent from the room to do errands of various kinds. This situation did improve somewhat, but it left a bitter taste in her mouth. At the end of her second week she lamented: "If she didn't have the time then why did she take me?" She appreciated the "tips" that later came her way from her teacher, but nonetheless felt that their relationship, and the way in which she had been utilized, left much to be desired.

Dana's situation was quite different. As I mentioned previously, she knew her cooperating teacher prior to the practicum and had, in fact, requested this particular placement. I visited her once during the practicum and immediately formed an impression that they were "buddies." Their mannerisms were quite similar, although Dana was louder and more aggressive. They got along very well, and Dana felt that she was given a great deal of freedom to do as she wished, although I never had the sense that she attempted to deviate from the established structure in any significant way. Nevertheless, it was obvious each time I spoke with her on the telephone that a major reason why she was enjoying her practicum was the supportive and amiable relationship she had with her cooperating teacher.

Mardi was the same. She described the relationship with her cooperating teacher this way: "She pats me on the back, I pat her on the back." She did say that she felt her teacher had a difficult time "letting go," but nevertheless, Mardi felt very happy to have been placed where she was. When I spoke with her just before the practicum ended she said: "My cooperating teacher was my buddy. She taught me *everything*." And added: "We were like friends."

Anise was more critical of her cooperating teacher. At the end of the first week she told me that she had never observed her teacher with a lesson plan. And, as a further comment on the preparation skills of her cooperating teacher, Anise added: "She's really into games. So she prepares one game five years ago." When I asked for her early thoughts on her placement, she was characteristically direct: "It's not giving me an example of a superlative teacher in a superlative classroom." "She nice. I just don't think it's that wonderful an example." She received very little feedback from her cooperating teacher. In fact she said that the only negative comment the cooperating teacher made throughout the eight weeks was that Anise uttered "O.K." too frequently. Anise regarded this as both bad and good. The dearth of comments left her to critically assess her own performance and to assume that everything was alright (in her last week she told me that she was "not getting any feedback to improve myself"). It also gave her the sense of being able to do largely as she wished, at least within the bounds of conformity as she had defined it. On the other hand, I suspect that had she received regular feedback, such as that to which Margo was accustomed, the nature of the practicum would have been changed for her, especially if the comments were predominantly negative. Anise readily admitted that she didn't cope well with criticism, no matter how constructive it was.

Gwen's situation was interesting. For most of the practicum she was very pleased with the relationship she and her cooperating teacher had formed. She felt that her teacher was supportive and that she received plenty of decision making freedom. She wasn't overly impressed when she received (unexpectedly) a "lower" midterm evaluation, but her teacher explained that she believed this would give Gwen "something to work for." Gwen felt let down, especially since the grades didn't correlate with the verbal feedback she had received to that point. Nonetheless, she continued to describe the relationship as "great."

In the middle of April, approximately two weeks before the practicum ended, their relationship deteriorated rapidly, and what had been a very positive experience turned sour. As Gwen told it, her cooperating teacher had applied for a teaching position at the grade two level within the same school, and had been led to believe by the principal that it was as good as hers. Armed with this knowledge, she began to prepare materials for her "new" assignment and to ignore kindergarten altogether.

When Gwen first told me about this she summed it up by saying: "I'm almost left numb this week." She said that her teacher had lost interest in the children and that she

(Gwen) had had to deal with all of their problems and cope with visiting parents. There was no doubt in her mind that their relationship had changed drastically. She described her teacher as now having an "I don't care" attitude. She lamented: "I can't believe the change in her. It's really stunning."

By the last week it looked as though her cooperating teacher would not receive the grade two position, so she was applying elsewhere. Gwen described their relationship as a "hodge podge", adding: "I don't know where I stand. One minute it's hot, the next minute it's cold."

She continued to derive a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction through her interaction with the children. But whereas she had originally been happy with her placement, she now found herself glad that it would soon be over.

Cathy also had an "interesting" relationship with her teacher, and it had a significant impact on the way she experienced the practicum. Like Leger and Margo, she had strong views on what constituted appropriate teaching at the early childhood level. And while her classroom was organized around learning centres, her cooperating teacher operated in a "step-wise," structured manner. [I never visited Cathy, but her description of her situation sounded remarkably similar to Leger's.] Seeing herself as much more open and creative, she was at odds with her teacher's way of doing things, and was not one to keep quiet about it indefinitely. By the end of March they had a confrontation. Her teacher told her what she expected of her, and Cathy in turn said that she felt totally overwhelmed. While this earned her a little more freedom of action, she didn't feel that their relationship was especially close.

The Faculty Consultant: Role Ambiguity

Like the cooperating teacher, the faculty consultant was a significant person in the practicum experiences of the four key informants. None of the students felt that the consultant was *as* important as the cooperating teacher for, in general, they only visited briefly once a week. But, when all was said and done, their assessment counted as much as that of the cooperating teacher (a fact which invariably drew caustic remarks and incredulous faces from Becky and Melinda).

The faculty consultant was the university's supervisory representative during the eight week practicum. The role was filled by professors, graduate students, and retired or unemployed teachers who had been contracted for this specific purpose (each group was represented in this study). And although conducting regular assessments of each individual's progress was an obvious function, the details of their role remained murky in the minds of the student teachers. The consultant usually visited once a week for a short period of time and provided oral and/or written feedback to each student teacher after the lesson. Both the faculty consultant and the cooperating teacher prepared two written formal evaluations - one at the midpoint and the other at the conclusion of the practicum. I refer to these as "formal" evaluations because they were done on special forms provided by the university and became a part of each student's file. As far as the student teachers were concerned, these were what counted when it came time to apply for permanent positions.

Not surprisingly, each student's relationship with their faculty consultant was unique. The quality of the relationship depended on two factors: how the student teacher and the faculty consultant defined the latter's role, and whether the suggestions and criticisms of the faculty consultant meshed with those of the cooperating teacher and existing practice in the classroom. In some cases, notably Becky's, certain personal characteristics became irritants as well. Listening to Becky unleash a barrage of uncomplimentary remarks about her faculty consultant was always startling after hearing Margo speak so highly of hers. But it is the very existence of such extremes that allows us to isolate factors which appear to be critical in shaping these relationships.

The role of the faculty consultant first became an issue (and in this case, a concern) in conversation with Becky. During my initial visit she told me about their first meeting, and it was immediately obvious to me that Becky disapproved of her consultant from the outset. It wasn't the fact that she *had* a faculty consultant that annoyed her; it was the woman's ideas on schooling in general, and kindergarten in particular, that were contrary to the Early Childhood ideology. Becky explained:

> ... it's more along the lines of "sit in your desk and...," you know, traditional grade one classroom. It's not for kindergarten. [My cooperating teacher] suggested that I phone and talk to [Dr. Mullen] about it, but I don't think [Dr. Mullen] has really anything to say or do with our faculty consultant. I really don't think that is optional. I mean, she may be a perfectly wonderful lady. She seems like she's interested in helping us learn ... but she still has her own set ideas.

This created a situation that made Becky feel like she was being pulled in different directions. She felt obliged to adhere to standard practice as she defined it in her classroom, but she felt that her faculty consultant expected something significantly different. She said her cooperating teacher sympathized with her predicament and advised her to give the consultant what she expected on the days she visited. Becky elaborated:

> ... she (the faculty consultant) obviously gave us something and said: "This is what I want. Do it this way or you don't do as well as if you do it the other way," which is *basically* what she said. That was made clear. It was! "I expect this of you. I expect you to dwell on, in the first week, your speech, the children's speech, writing, reading skills," you know. "O.K. lady, fine. If that's what you want, that's what you get," sort of thing. Which is a shame, but she made it clear.

By the third week Becky had developed a personal dislike for her consultant. She described her as "egocentric" and as someone who lived "in her own little world." Although the midpoint evaluation was approaching she didn't seem worried, for she felt that the assessment of her cooperating teacher was far more important than that of her consultant. Furthermore, she had found support for her views amongst the members of the staff. Many of them knew the faculty consultant because she had supervised other student teachers in the school. Becky told me that they all considered her to be a little "strange" and "looney." She even said that the principal had told her that he would "go to bat" for her if there was any discrepancy between the evaluations of her cooperating teacher and her faculty consultant.

Becky received a good evaluation from her consultant. Although she had been prepared to make changes to her lesson plans for her visit, she found that the consultant was not adverse to the situation as it existed in her classroom. In fact, not only did she receive a good evaluation but, as the weeks passed, the consultant arranged for other student teachers to come and observe her.

Even with this unexpected adulation, however, their relationship soured, at least in Becky's eyes. She was indignant at the way her consultant conducted herself in the classroom. And on the midpoint evaluation Becky was beside herself when she read how frequently her consultant claimed to have observed her, and some of the things she said. Good though it was, Becky claimed that much of it *never happened*.

By the fifth week things had gotten worse. Becky appreciated the positive feedback from her faculty consultant, but found her visits stressful:

> It's really frustrating. I mean, she gave me all fours and everything but ... Everytime she comes here I go home with a headache. Seriously! And a stomach ache ... And [my cooperating teacher] was mad. She made [my cooperating teacher] angry. (At this point Becky raises her voice and becomes mildly vociferous) She sits there and she babbles and she doesn't say anything. And I know I could do something a lot more interesting and I would actually learn something. You know? It's really frustrating. Then I hear these people who have such great faculty consultants and I get stuck with somebody like that. (She chuckles) Better that than having a yucky teacher. I guess you can't have both. Can't have everything.

This was how their relationship remained. The consultant continued to shower Becky with praise, and Becky continued to dislike her intensely.

There were similarities in Melinda's case. Her relationship with her faculty consultant was uncomfortable, although this situation was slower to evolve than it did with Becky. And Melinda also felt as though she was being pulled in two different directions. But unlike Becky, she didn't have the same degree of support from her cooperating teacher, and the tension of feeling that she had to satisfy diverse expectations grew as the term progressed. There was one other striking difference: *Melinda* was the one who was teaching in a very traditional manner because that was the nature of her setting. Yet her faculty consultant continually prodded her to individualize.

Initially Melinda's cooperating teacher supported her in her dilemma. They even arranged to undertake special student grouping one day when the faculty consultant was in the classroom. Unfortunately, she left before that point in the lesson arrived. When she had gone, Melinda's cooperating teacher walked by and muttered: "Now you can relax."

Their relationship began to deteriorate after her midpoint evaluation. Melinda wasn't pleased with her assessment and (privately to me) accused her consultant of making "broad generalizations" after having witnessed only three lessons. She also complained that the consultant was only available during narrowly defined times. This annoyed Melinda for the duration of the practicum. She explained:

> [What] really irritates me is she's just not available to come into the classroom very often. And it's not that she's seeing other student teachers, it's that she has other commitments outside of her faculty consultant role. And I feel that is wrong. She says: "Oh, well I'll leave next week open for you, *but* I can only come out on Tuesdays and Thursdays." *Well!* And there's four student teachers and she can only come out in the morning. And every morning we have language or math and that's all she's able to see. And she's always putting restrictions on the days she's able to come out, which limits us ...

To further aggravate matters, Melinda felt that even though she had conformed to the expectations of her cooperating teacher, her teacher had, during the midterm evaluation conference, sided with the faculty consultant. This confused Melinda because the expectations of her consultant were quite different from those of her cooperating teacher. Consequently, after the evaluation she didn't know where she stood in the eyes of either of them.

The biggest point of contention was classroom structure. Melinda tended to overreact to her consultant's expectations:

> ... it seems with her I have to have, for every different kid, a different lesson plan. So it seems [that's what] she's trying to put across, so I don't know. It isn't feasible.

At one point Melinda phoned her cooperating teacher at her home to tell her about the faculty consultant's goading. She told her that everything always seemed to come down to the same question: Do all children need the same class instruction? If she didn't find support in her cooperating teacher, she at least found justification for continuing as she was, because her teacher told her that she wanted certain things done in a certain way.

But the issue never went away. As the end of the practicum approached Melinda became very nervous about her progress. She pointedly asked her cooperating teacher if she was improving, and asked her consultant if she would conduct a "three-quarter" evaluation during the sixth or seventh week. When her consultant replied (by note) that she "didn't have time," Melinda was flabbergasted. In her eighth week she concluded: "As far as I'm concerned, they should be available to us when we need them." She was not pleased with her faculty consultant and this, added to other pressures she experienced, created many tension-filled days.

Leger's relationship with his faculty consultant was decidedly neutral compared with the others. He was initially apprehensive about what he defined as his consultant's lack of knowledge on the structuring of kindergarten classrooms. He commented during my second visit:

> I don't think he understands quite yet what kind of teaching goes on at this level. Like, it's not teacher-sits-at-the-front-of-the-room-and-lectures-and-has-an-opening-and-a-closure. You have those things, but they're not normal. Not what you'd expect in a normal classroom. I don't know how he's going to react to that. I'll do my first one (lesson) ... just like I would normally do it and see how he reacts to it, and if he acts in [a way] that sort of says he doesn't understand, I'll try and explain to him that this is different.

Leger did not feel that he had to deviate from what he was doing to satisfy the expectations of his consultant. In fact, these expectations were never clearly defined in terms of what he *should* be doing, and at no time did the faculty consultant ask that Leger deviate significantly from standard practice. Furthermore, although Leger appreciated the power possessed by the faculty consultant because of his part in the evaluation process, he didn't feel he was as important as the cooperating teacher:

> They're not an integral part of this program besides evaluating you as a professional from the university. So you don't really have to have a working relationship with them. And I think a good faculty consultant will encourage discussion and, you know, would ask you: "Why wouldn't you have done it that way?" and encourage you to bring out your own ideas ... without any repercussions from the cooperating teacher.

When the faculty consultant first visited, Leger felt that he was somewhat taken aback by the arrangement of the classroom. He was hesitant about sitting in a chair built for a five year old child, and generally seemed to feel out of place. Leger wondered what impact all of this might have on his evaluation.

As it turned out things only got better. Any concern which Leger might have had proved to be unfounded. He found that his faculty consultant was very perceptive and that he was quite understanding of a kindergarten setting. Even so, Leger was caught off guard when his consultant visited during the fifth week and told Leger that he thought the room was quite structured for a kindergarten. Leger was both shocked and pleased. He referred to his faculty consultant as a "comrade in arms."

He was in for an even greater shock in his seventh week. When I visited at this time we decided to go for lunch at a nearby McDonald's. While we ate Leger told me about his faculty consultant's most recent visit. After he described the lesson he'd done, he said:

> ... and then he asked me for my lesson plans and I said: "Oh, they're in the staffroom," and they were. Not the ones for the afternoon, 'cause I had none. He said: "Oh, well that's alright, that's alright. I know you've thought pretty well (conversation on tape garbled) ... I'm going: "Whew!" And then he said, you know, he gave me a few comments, and he said: "I would comment more but you can't improve much on perfection." I sat there going: "Oh-h. Do I have an ego problem now or what."

Margo's relationship with the faculty consultant was even better than Leger's. A number of factors undoubtedly influenced this. They were from the same ethnic background, they attended the same church, and the consultant had known Margo's sister. Margo felt she was someone with whom she could *share* problems and thoughts. In a sense the faculty consultant provided an outlet for Margo because she could say things to her which she would never say to her cooperating teacher. Margo saw her consultant as a "middle person:"

> She's ... kind of a middle person, where I can explain to her some of my frustrations or some of my things ~~with~~ [my cooperating teacher] that I wouldn't feel comfortable with [my cooperating teacher]. She's a middle person who can kind of empathize.

Most importantly, neither Margo nor her faculty consultant defined the latter's role as that of an evaluator. While both were well aware that she performed an evaluative function, this aspect of her role never assumed a prominent position in their relationship. During the fourth week I asked Margo to describe her relationship with her faculty consultant. This is how she responded:

> I would say "supportive" and "open-minded." Like I generally feel good when she's here. I feel good about her and I don't mind her observing me at all. And our talk afterwards is always a really positive talk. So it's a nice feeling. I don't feel like I'm being evaluated with this evil eye looking at me.
>
> She says: "My role is a consultant. I'm not your evaluator." Like in a sense she is, but she says: "I'm here to help you and to consult with you and make things as best as I can." And that's what she is.

This sense of being evaluated or not being evaluated was important to Margo. It was a major factor in the way she defined her relationship with her faculty consultant and her cooperating teacher. She commented one day:

> I find [my faculty consultant] is more thorough or probably a little less threatening. I find when I'm with [my cooperating teacher] it's more *evaluating*.

Four different student teachers, four different faculty consultants, four different settings, and four different experiences. But in *each* case, the dominant factor which structured the relationship centered on role definition or, in a more expanded sense, definition of the situation. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that the faculty consultant served an evaluative function. But it was much more pronounced for Becky and Melinda than it was for Leger and Margo. Furthermore, Becky and Melinda, at times, felt that they had to satisfy conflicting expectations and this caused both of them a great deal of anguish. I sometimes felt that had they traded faculty consultants their situations would have improved noticeably.

On the other hand, Leger and Margo viewed their consultant's role as supportive rather than evaluative. For Margo in particular, role definition was crucial. Sharing a similar background with her faculty consultant certainly helped, but the principal factor which defined their relationship was the way in which the consultant viewed her own role; she saw herself primarily as a *consultant*. Although I didn't meet the faculty consultant (I intentionally avoided them in all cases so as not to raise questions about my presence), I gathered from Margo that this meant that the consultant attempted to assist her in full recognition of *the context in which she was placed*. This *did not* involve holding unrealistic expectations of her.

Secondary Informants. For the majority of the secondary informants, the faculty consultant was someone who either had a recognizable impact on their experience in a decidedly negative way, or was someone whom they saw so rarely that they questioned the necessity of the role. For the latter group the evaluation provided by the faculty consultant was a bit of a joke, even though it counted equally with the cooperating teacher's.

Only two students, Holly and Dana, felt reasonably pleased with their consultants when the practicum had finished.

Janet's relationship with her faculty consultant was not a positive one. She had the same consultant as Becky, and her experience, if anything, was worse.

She felt that the expectations of her consultant were totally unrealistic. Having to provide pages and pages of lesson plans placed a strain on her which was readily apparent whenever we met. She shared her feelings with Holly, who apparently told her own consultant of Janet's situation. By the end of the second week Holly told Janet that *her* consultant had recommended someone who was "discreet" to whom she could turn for help. Janet rejected this since she did not want to create more problems than she already had. Like Becky, she took solace in the fact that other teachers in her school referred to her faculty consultant as a "twit," and the principal apparently said that she understood that the university might take action of some sort. But this didn't materialize. And through it all, Janet felt the stress of having to meet her consultant's expectations in order to receive a good evaluation.

The worst blow came during Janet's third week of student teaching. We met at the end of that week, and I had never before seen her so depressed. Not anticipating the extent of her despair, I asked how the week had gone: "It's been the worst week of my entire life." "I'm a failure as a teacher." Apparently her faculty consultant had told her that she wasn't suited to teaching kindergarten children, although Janet actually had received the impression that her consultant felt she (Janet) was in the wrong profession entirely. However, her consultant gave her a very good final evaluation and omitted any mention of "difficulties" Janet had in associating with young children.

Cathy also found herself in a conflict situation, but of a slightly different nature. Her position was such that she felt "trapped" between her two supervisors. She described them as holding opposing views on some aspects of pedagogy, especially reading and language instruction. When Cathy's faculty consultant visited, she regularly criticized the way the cooperating teacher conducted the class. And when she left the cooperating teacher would criticize the faculty consultant. Cathy sensed that her cooperating teacher felt that academics at the university didn't have a good understanding of what was going on in the schools and that her faculty consultant felt that many classroom teachers were out of touch with recent developments in the field of education. For her part, Cathy simply agreed with whomever she was talking to at the time. But she was critical of the fact that the dispute between her cooperating teacher and her faculty consultant had relegated her to a position of secondary importance.

Four of the student teachers saw their consultants infrequently. Jill started the practicum feeling pleased with her consultant: "He's excellent. I'm a bit of a rebel and so is he." She had chanced upon two of her classmates (Janet and Melinda) at the university one day and had heard their complaints about their consultants. She was quite happy that her experience seemed different, and that her consultant was not making unrealistic demands of her. And she was only mildly concerned that she saw rarely him.

But, by the middle of April, two weeks before the practicum ended, Jill had become concerned that her consultant had only seen her teach once. He'd been out to the school more frequently than that and had chatted with the children and her cooperating teacher, but only on one occasion had he observed Jill's lesson. He told her that he didn't have to watch her teach to know how she was doing.

I spoke with Jill again the day before the practicum ended. She told me that her faculty consultant had visited her that day and had stayed for approximately five minutes and commented that that was not atypical; when he came he usually "breezed in and breezed out."

Gwen's situation was similar. By the end of her second week she hadn't even heard from her faculty consultant. When he finally did appear (in the third week), Gwen got the impression that he was not overly competent. He had called to tell her that he would be out on a certain day and wanted to see her teach a lesson. Gwen had planned a field trip for the children on that day but altered her plans to accommodate her faculty consultant. Much to her disappointment, he arrived well after she had finished the lesson.

By the end of March she was describing him as "totally useless." He visited infrequently, never took notes while observing her, and didn't bother to conduct a midterm evaluation. Gwen couldn't see how he could justify a mark at the end of the term.

At the beginning of her eighth week he visited without calling to say he was coming. This upset the cooperating teacher and she confronted him. Gwen was taken aback by what she considered to be unprofessional conduct ("when two adults went at it") in front of the children.

When he did speak to Gwen, he told her that he was concerned with the marks her cooperating teacher had given her on the midterm evaluation. He claimed that students who received grades of twos and threes (as Gwen had done) were failing. When he left, Gwen found herself wondering what was going to happen. Between the problems she was encountering with her cooperating teacher (related in the previous section) and the apparent incompetence of her faculty consultant, she felt very unsure of herself.

The stories were similar for Anise and Mardi. By the end of March (five weeks into the practicum) Anise had seen her consultant but once. She said: "I've forgotten about him." She was pleased with the comments he eventually made about her performance, but added that her cooperating teacher had had to tell him what to look for since he was not familiar with a kindergarten setting. In addition to this, Anise was incredulous at the fact that her consultant treated her as a "colleague," regularly sharing his concerns about other student teachers with her.

At the conclusion of the practicum Mardi commented: "I don't really see the sense of having a faculty consultant. My faculty consultant was just there to show up almost." On the final evaluation he indicated that he had observed her on six occasions. Mardi said there'd only been three visits.

Evaluation: Under the Microscope

There were two periods of formal evaluations during the practicum: a midterm assessment during the fourth week, and a final assessment in the eighth week. These were undertaken separately by the cooperating teacher and the faculty consultant, so that each student received four formal evaluations. Only the final evaluations became a part of their file.

The formal evaluations were prepared on forms provided by the university. The student teachers were judged on nine dimensions: planning and organization, teaching skills and strategies, evaluation, management, relationship with pupils, communication, personal qualities, professional qualities, and self-evaluation. In each category the evaluator provided written comments and assigned a numerical grade from one (low) to five (high).

But evaluation was much more than this. It had a pervasive quality that, while not always mentioned, was always present. Whether in regular (if not daily) conferences with cooperating teachers, during visits from faculty consultants, through ongoing self-criticism, in comments by children, or the behaviour of all those present, the student teachers were constantly receiving feedback which contributed to the development and modification of perspectives on themselves as teachers. They were always the centre of attention.

I do not intend to focus specifically on the content of these evaluations. Instead, I wish to examine the *process* of being evaluated as it was experienced by the four key informants. While these two dimensions are obviously interrelated, the latter is more pertinent to the present discussion.

Once again there was a spectrum of experiences; a result, in part, of the idiosyncratic elements inherent in each situation. Yet, there were also similarities, especially when the evaluation experience is viewed in light of certain previously described situational factors.

The most important determinant affecting the evaluation experience was the way in which the student teacher-cooperating teacher relationship was defined. In the master-apprentice situations (Margo and Melinda) the constant scrutiny created a degree of tension, especially as the term wore on. Where the relationship was not as strongly defined in this manner (Leger and Becky) the tensions were less apparent.

The student teacher-faculty consultant relationship was also a factor, though the reduced frequency of contact made it less salient than the relationship with the cooperating teacher.

Margo felt that the process of evaluation prevented her from being free to do as she wished in the classroom. For her, this was the principal factor which defined her as a student. During my second visit she commented on the feeling:

> ... having people observe, or knowing you're being evaluated holds me back, and I know it does. Because I know if I did it I would do things the way *I* felt right and there would be no one questioning me. I think that makes a difference. Until I'm not a student, I feel like a student.

She was especially distressed at being evaluated when things didn't go well. Children were unpredictable, and if they misbehaved when someone was observing, Margo felt it reflected negatively on her. She commented during the fourth week:

> I prefer when they're (observers) not there. You know, in the sense that I feel I'm more in control, I don't have this eagle eye looking over me. I think that's because you know it doesn't always go the way you want ... I guess you don't like to admit being a failure and being incompetent.

And in her eighth week:

> *Let me teach one whole week just for myself.* I don't want anyone observing. I might make mistakes, but I mean that's going to help me. You know, in my own evaluation.

She made the following log entry at approximately the same time: "My last week - I'm looking forward to finishing. I am tired of being constantly observed and analyzed."

It wasn't that she disagreed with the assessments she received, or that she objected to being evaluated. In fact, her evaluations were all quite positive. It was just that the constant inspection made her feel like she was always performing. Sometimes her cooperating teacher observed directly, while at other times she sat in another part of the room doing something else. But she was *always* there.

As I described in the previous section, Margo's relationship with her faculty consultant was a very positive and supportive one, and Margo usually looked forward to her visits. But as the practicum progressed, even her faculty consultant became just one more person who was constantly observing her. By the last week, she just wanted to be left alone.

Melinda's situation was even more acute. Her sense of coming to understand herself as a teacher depended very much on the comments of her cooperating teacher and her faculty consultant. At the same time, it added extra pressure, for she also felt as if she were constantly performing. In her view (and I'm sure the others shared this sentiment) evaluation was a two-way street: it was important to have the feedback, but it would have been nice not to be "under the microscope" so regularly. This situation was aggravated by the fact that some of the comments she received were, in her opinion, negative.

During the times I visited Melinda, I noted that she frequently glanced in the direction of her cooperating teacher while conducting a lesson. In fact, on at least one occasion I felt that this distracted her to the point where she didn't hear some of the comments made by the children. When I asked her about it she replied that she was trying to determine whether or not she was being evaluated.

She was also uncomfortable during evaluation conferences with her cooperating teacher and/or her faculty consultant. On one occasion she mentioned that a three-way conference had been conducted at the time of her midterm evaluation. Since *she* was the topic of conversation, the situation caused her a great deal of anxiety. It was made even more difficult by the fact that she had been more complimentary in her self-evaluation than her teacher and consultant were in their evaluations of her. [Another student teacher had told her that it was wise to evaluate yourself highly in order to demonstrate self-confidence]. In her words, she really had to "swallow" during this meeting.

She commented on innumerable occasions that she wished her cooperating teacher would leave the room so that she could "feel relaxed." This rarely happened, however, and Melinda complained that it prevented her from "being the teacher."

Interestingly, when her cooperating teacher suddenly stopped evaluating her lessons as regularly as she had been (in about the sixth week) with no explanation, Melinda saw *this* as cause for concern. She commented:

> [My cooperating teacher] hasn't been evaluating me anymore. I don't know why. I don't know if that's good or bad. *That* I guess has been bothering me a little bit and hasn't made me feel very good about anything. I don't see any improvement in myself. I think I'm level, unfortunately.

Her concern over evaluation was exacerbated by a deteriorating relationship with her faculty consultant. As related previously, she felt pulled in opposite directions by the conflicting expectations of her two principal evaluators. And even though her cooperating teacher made a number of complimentary remarks about her, especially as the end neared, the tension in her situation made her very uncomfortable at times.

Evaluation was regularly on her mind. When we talked Melinda always commented on feedback she'd received from her cooperating teacher or her faculty consultant. She never seemed to feel certain of where she stood in their eyes. This bothered her greatly, for she was (in my opinion) a person who wanted to do an excellent job. It created an interesting paradox, for while she lamented the fact that she was constantly being scrutinized, she *wanted* the feedback in order to gain a sense of how well she was doing. I don't think she ever *really* found out.

Leger tended to be very pragmatic about evaluation. There was no question in his mind of the importance of this particular practicum. But getting good marks was, in his opinion, as much a political process as it was a matter of competence. This meant establishing good relationships with key individuals, notably his cooperating teacher. During the third week the issue of the cooperating teacher-student teacher relationship arose in conversation. I asked him why he felt it was important. He was blunt in his reply:

> [It's important] because they're evaluating you. If they don't like you they're not going to give you a good evaluation no matter how good you are.

He felt he had a good relationship with his cooperating teacher. But as I related earlier, he defined it as a "hurried" one, meaning that she spent much of the time absorbed in her own activities. Consequently, he didn't have the same sense of being closely scrutinized that Margo or Melinda had. He did, however, share their view that if he were not being evaluated, no matter how subtle the techniques, he would do things differently.

For Leger, conformity and the evaluation process were intricately interwoven. He didn't experience the same degree of anxiety as either Margo or Melinda because he wasn't being constantly observed, but he did pay a price in terms of how *he* felt about what he was doing. Getting a good evaluation meant having a positive working relationship with his cooperating teacher. And having such a relationship meant conforming. As he said during one of our meetings, you simply don't do subtle things to make your cooperating teacher feel that her program is inferior. So he went along with established practice. And this bothered him more than it bothered any of the others. He saw himself becoming a "robot," and he didn't like what he saw.

Beyond this, however, the evaluation process was not particularly problematic for Leger. He had a great deal of confidence in his ability to work with children, and he was able to critically assess himself without needing constant feedback from his cooperating teacher. So he felt that everything was fine as long as there were no surprises on his midterm and final evaluations. And there weren't.

In Becky's case the evaluation experience was somewhat different from the others, especially Margo and Melinda. Although her cooperating teacher was in the classroom most of the time (as was theirs), their relationship was not defined as a master-apprentice one. Consequently Becky never had the sense that she was under close scrutiny all the time. Instead, she felt she had the freedom to do as she wished (though she rarely deviated from established practice) and she and her cooperating teacher worked together in the classroom. Becky, of course, was carrying most of the instructional load, and there was never any doubt that her cooperating teacher was evaluating her. But their relationship was not defined on this basis. They were both teachers in the classroom and Becky felt that she was as much the teacher as was her cooperating teacher. This sense was reinforced by daily "evaluation;" evaluation in the form of complimentary "asides," affectionate hugs, compliant children, and generally a very constructive teaching milieu.

The only tension associated with evaluation came as a result of her relationship with her faculty consultant. Although her consultant's assessments became highly complimentary, Becky found her weekly visits stressful. She didn't enjoy having her in the classroom and frequently thought that her comments, as positive as they were, were without foundation.

Beyond the experiences with her cooperating teacher and her faculty consultant, there were a few instances which revealed that Becky didn't like being evaluated when a situation was defined (by her) in that way. On one day in particular, when her cooperating teacher had left for a medical appointment, a parent came to the classroom looking for the teacher. Becky related the experience:

> A parent came in when she (the cooperating teacher) was gone to the doctor and I could sense that ... like right away she came in and "Where's [the regular teacher]?" You know, like, "What are you doing here?" She sat at the door and watched me and it made me feel like she was watching to see if I was going to do something wrong. She came in and asked me to get [my cooperating teacher] to phone her ... so I did. And it was just about some testing or something but it made me feel like she felt that I wasn't qualified or capable of being here.

She made a similar comment as a result of the presence of another parent:

> *She makes me so nervous.* She sat there and watched me as if she was just *waiting* to write something down that I'm doing wrong or something like this. By the end of the day I was a nervous wreck.

This resembled the experiences of Margo and Melinda, except that it didn't involve the cooperating teacher or the faculty consultant. But it did involve being scrutinized.

[Interestingly, on one of the days when her cooperating teacher was absent from school, I phoned Becky to see if I could visit. I didn't know about her teacher's absence beforehand. Becky said that she'd prefer if I picked a different day as she would feel "funny" if she "screwed up" and I was there to see it.]

It is also interesting to note that both Margo and Leger related instances to me where they felt less than sure of themselves in the presence of parents. [Frequent parent-school communication is encouraged at kindergarten and it was not uncommon for me to encounter parents in the classrooms when I visited Leger, Margo and Becky. Melinda, on the other hand, had no in-class contact with parents other than observing an occasional parent-teacher interview.]

All of this suggests to me that the way in which the student teachers experienced the process of evaluation depended greatly on the way their relationships had been defined with others in their setting. Being constantly observed, like Margo and Melinda, was a disquieting experience, almost regardless of the nature of the feedback they received (obviously, where the evaluative comments were negative, the experience was all the more trying). These two students *knew* they were being watched on a regular basis and that their actions were carefully dissected.

In Becky's case, this sense of being continually observed was largely absent. This was a result of the way she and her cooperating teacher defined their relationships and subsequently went about their work. When someone unfamiliar entered the room, however, and watched her closely, Becky felt uncomfortable. At times like these she felt less like the teacher and more like a student.

Secondary Informants. As I've stated earlier in this study, all the student teachers believed that a positive outcome to this practicum was paramount in securing a teaching position. When this was translated into a numerical score (which everyone did), it meant they had to obtain all fives, if possible.

Since I observed only two of the secondary informants (Anise and Dana, once each) and generally had less contact with them than with the key informants, I was unable to gain the same understanding of their circumstances. In most cases it was difficult to gain a sense of *how* their cooperating teachers went about being cooperating teachers. Did they closely scrutinize their students (as had Margo's and Melinda's cooperating teachers), or did they adopt more of a collegial stance (like Becky's)? Nevertheless, many of the secondary informants made comments that gave me some idea how they felt about being observed and evaluated.

Janet seemed more sensitive to being evaluated than Holly did. She was very self-conscious, and confessed to feeling nervous when she was being observed. Even her cooperating teacher noticed it and told her that she was more relaxed when she was not being watched directly. As it had with Margo, eight weeks of regular observation culminated with Janet not wanting any more of it. Her strained relationship with her faculty consultant only served to make the evaluation process more stressful. By the last week she said: "I just wanted to get out. I was just sick of it, I didn't need it anymore."

For Dana, evaluation involved less tension. As she related earlier, she had a very comfortable relationship with her cooperating teacher and seemed to have a good relationship with her faculty consultant. However, if the children acted up while she was being observed, she became very conscious of herself and her actions. She told me that she worried about her consultant's visit on a day when the children were particularly "hairy." And she admitted that if the children became "active" while her cooperating teacher was observing, she'd be bothered by the fact that she didn't know what her teacher was thinking.

Anise was very conscious of evaluation. She confessed to being nervous during observation. There was little doubt that, for her, student teaching was a performance, although she never actually used that term. She was characteristically direct and honest when she told me (at the end of the second week) that while it would be wonderful to be able to learn everything, she felt that the objective of the practicum was to get through with as high a mark as possible.

Cathy was also conscious of being scrutinized. She claimed to be more relaxed when her cooperating teacher was absent. Having someone present made her feel as though she were being evaluated. This made a big difference to her.

Jill also felt extra pressure from evaluation. She told me that she was exhausted after her first full week of teaching, not, so much, because of the children, but because of being evaluated at the same time. Although she said that her cooperating teacher didn't watch her closely, she felt the pressure when something went wrong: "Oh, oh, she's marking that one down."

As the practicum progressed Jill became sensitive to the fact that her cooperating teacher was not giving her very much feedback on her lessons. Eventually she approached her and said that she didn't know where she stood. This was reminiscent of Melinda's situation: sensitivity to being observed but equal sensitivity to sparse feedback.

Both Gwen and Mardi claimed that being observed didn't bother them. Mardi attributed this to certain social activities in which she engaged where she was always under close scrutiny. At the same time, both were so aware of the importance of the outcome of the practicum that they became concerned when their numerical scores didn't (in their opinions) correlate with the nature of the feedback they had received.

Gwen, at first, didn't seem to mind the process of evaluation (possibly because she rarely saw her faculty consultant and, at least for six weeks, had a supportive relationship with her cooperating teacher). But, by the middle of April she had become quite concerned about the outcome. That was the point at which her relationship with her teacher changed dramatically and she began to feel unsure of herself. She commented at the time: "I'm really concerned about the outcome of my evaluation. That's the most important thing they look at when they're hiring." And even during the last week when her teacher told her that she was doing a "superb" job, Gwen wanted to know whether "superb" would translate into five's on her final evaluation. Her teacher seemed insensitive to the "realities" of the job market, and told her that she shouldn't be concerned with marks. Gwen argued that this was what employers looked at, but her teacher seemed to reject this and responded (according to Gwen): "Time will tell." Gwen went away worrying.

While Mardi claimed not to mind close observation, she was not pleased when her grades didn't correspond with the feedback she had received. She felt her faculty consultant was the "problem." The consultant apparently interpreted fives as an indicator of a perfect performance, and rationalized that no one was perfect. She told Mardi that even teachers who had taught for thirty years were not perfect. Mardi, however, was unwilling to accept this line of argument and countered by questioning the purpose in placing fives on the form. Surely they were there to be assigned under the "right" circumstances. Her consultant conceded that she had a valid point, but steadfastly maintained her position. (Interestingly, Mardi did receive *some* fives on her final evaluation, an apparent testament to the validity of her argument and the weakness of the stance adopted by her faculty consultant.

Mardi's cooperating teacher however, unlike Gwen's, viewed the numerical score in terms of the process of job searching. Mardi added: "Which is the way it should be looked at."

Minor Themes

Controlling the Children

Becky had virtually no discipline problems at all during the eight week practicum. During the first few days a child would occasionally say "You're not the boss," but she was quickly accepted as one of the teachers in the classroom. She came into a very stable situation (I have no data to support this statement, but having observed the cooperating teacher interact with the children, I strongly suspect it is the case) and did nothing to alter it. In fact, of all the key informants, she was the one who most completely adopted her cooperating teacher's mannerisms. I can only speculate that this contributed to the stability of her situation. But management problems were never an issue when I visited the school, so Becky is not a part of this discussion.

Melinda was the most concerned over problems of classroom control. Student inattention and constant shuffling were very distracting to her. She spoke disparagingly of the incessant talking and the regular movement, and while she occasionally rationalized that it wasn't all that bad, it was obvious to me that she was greatly distressed by it.

At first she wondered whether this simply was the way it was in her room, and she commented one day that it was something she "had to get used to." She wondered whether it was the same for her cooperating teacher. But, by the third week, she decided to approach her teacher for advice:

> I find that the children are becoming quite loud and stuff at times when I'm trying to teach and when I want to have all of their attention. I told her (the cooperating teacher) I wasn't sure how I was thinking about this and how I should deal with it. I told her I realized the kids are probably just testing me out. And she mentioned that maybe I should choose a day and discuss with the children what rules are in the classroom, and either make up rules for myself and the kids or just talk about how the rules that they have with [the cooperating teacher] should be the same as the ones with me.

Melinda decided to give this a try. When we spoke the next week she had had the session with the children and it had apparently been unsuccessful, at least in altering their behaviour. After she reflected on it, she decided that perhaps she had been too friendly with them, and that she needed to be sterner (Melinda was not given to raising her voice or behaving in a heated manner):

> I tried to have a discussion with them that one day to say I deserve as much respect as their teacher does when she's up front of the class, and I expect them to sit and listen to me. But being the friendly person that I am I think I need to put my foot down a little bit harder. I have a hard time doing that with her in the room. I'm not sure why. I *just do*. Isn't that awful? I don't know why. I guess I just don't feel like it's my class when she's always there.

The situation still hadn't improved by the fifth week. Melinda was still thinking about that failed session with the children and she finally decided the proper approach would have been to assume a position of ascendancy:

> ... I did have that one talk with them that one time. I suppose maybe I should have been harder with them and not approach them on such a friendly level, but more on a superior level to them and said: "Hey, listen, this is the way it's going to be."

She told me one day that she felt she needed to "earn their respect" by raising her voice. But she resisted doing this. And while she had claimed earlier that she shied away from this approach because it was not her classroom, now she admitted that she avoided yelling at them for fear her cooperating teacher would think she'd lost control. So she continued as she was, trying to ignore as much as she could.

By the end of the practicum Melinda was very disturbed by the situation. She occasionally described the room as chaotic and found the students' "hyperactivity" maddening. She wondered about a change in seating arrangement but said her cooperating teacher resisted that idea. In the eighth week she told me in a resigned voice that she simply didn't know why the children talked so much.

[It was here where my interpretation of my role as a researcher posed some personal difficulty. Based on my visits to Melinda's classroom, I had formed the impression that student misbehaviour was more a result of organizational arrangements in the room than anything Melinda had or had not done. Yet, I refrained from offering her any advice or consolation even though I was tempted to do so. As a researcher, I felt that this might result in a significant "researcher effect" if she were to take any advice I might offer and substantially alter her approach. As an experienced teacher and friend, I wanted to say something that might alleviate her concern. In the end I chose to remain quiet, and I'm not convinced that this was an appropriate strategy.]

I'm sure if Leger had been there he would have immediately pinpointed the way in which student time was structured as the primary problem. I was surprised that Melinda never once mentioned this, at least in my presence. It was exactly this type of classroom arrangement that had been the brunt of so much criticism during the Early Childhood course.

Margo's situation was not as acute, but incidents occurred frequently enough to concern her. In fact, when I first visited her she had recently experienced a grim situation with one child who had had a temper tantrum and had refused to do anything Margo requested her. It was the incident that prompted her "guinea pig" remark because, since she was unfamiliar with school policy, she had had no idea how to handle the crisis. She told me that she normally gets very upset when children don't listen to her.

Margo found her morning group of kindergarten children to be the most difficult. [Interestingly, *all* of the key informants placed in kindergartens claimed that the morning class was the most difficult]. During the fourth week she endured a particularly trying morning and, had it not been for some soothing words from her cooperating teacher, might have ended her practicum there and then. She described the situation:

> I guess I was expecting them to be attending quite well 'cause they knew I was a teacher and they knew I've been around and I've always been there (Margo had only observed the morning group to this point in the practicum). But I think just knowing that I was the teacher ... they gave me kind of a run for my money. And just really pushing their limits. I used all the same techniques that I typically did in the afternoon, using my counting or giving them choices or reinforcement of positive behaviour. But they weren't effective like they would be in the afternoon. So that Monday noon I says: "This is it. I'm

> quitting." But then I talked to [my cooperating teacher] and she says: "What you did was typically what works for you. No matter what you would have done they would have responded the same way."

That evening in her log she had written that "... it's moments like these that I question why I am working with preschoolers."

By the time we talked that week Margo felt that the situation was improving. But she still found the children exasperating, and by the end of most mornings she felt drained:

> Usually by the end of the morning I'm pretty harried out. I needed that hour (lunch) just to kind of calm down or, you know, just to get my breather back. Because if I had another morning group in the afternoon I think it would be almost too much.

While the afternoon group was reportedly easier to deal with, I noted that there was one little boy in the class who was highly unpredictable and demonstrated a very short attention span. One incident, in particular, stays in my mind: whenever I visited Margo she wanted me to participate in the lesson, so I would sit on the floor with the children during circle time and participate in whatever they were doing (dancing, singing, reading, even once, making pudding). One day shortly after class had started, this particular boy began to misbehave by antagonizing the children near him and distracting Margo from what she was doing. She stopped her lesson and told him that he would have to leave the rug if he didn't behave. He looked down at the floor and quietly, but loud enough for all to hear, called her a "stupid bitch."

I hung my head, intensely disliking these situations and wishing I could somehow disappear, and waited for Margo to respond. But to her credit, she dealt with him very calmly. She removed him from the rug and continued with her lesson. He twitched and grumbled and lingered near the carpeted area, sticking a minute portion of one foot on the rug to see if Margo would respond. However, he stayed away until she permitted him to return.

I asked her later about this incident and she said: "That's not a big deal for him." She said that if he had screamed it to her face she probably would have reacted differently. I asked what she meant. She responded that it probably would have called for a "one on one" encounter.

With the exception of this one child, and two or three others who were easily distracted by him, the afternoon group *did* seem to be relatively acquiescent.

Discipline problems bothered Margo. She saw it as a reflection on her abilities as a teacher. She particularly disliked it when situations erupted while she was being observed. Although this did not happen often, she became very frustrated when it did occur. By the end of the practicum, she assessed her situation in this way:

> Some kids I really like and I could spend all day with. Some kids I don't want to be around.
>
> I get frustrated with kids who don't listen. You have to tell them over and over and over. You just get to the point where you just ... (making a fist) feel like bopping them.

For Leger, dealing with misbehaviour was something he did not enjoy, particularly when he felt confined by someone else's procedures. On his second day he noted in his log:

> I find it difficult to keep children doing something that they are not particularly interested in. I am also not sure how positive it is to have to tell children of this age to sit-down and be quiet over and over again.

He would carefully analyze incidents and isolate factors which he felt aggravated the situation. Not surprisingly, one of his pet peeves was program structure. He frequently told me that if it was his room he would simply stop what he was doing if the children became fidgety and allow them to do something else, like play at the centres. But in this room, he felt obliged to deal with the culprits when the situations arose and then continue with the lesson. This annoyed and frustrated him.

I asked him one day about his approach to discipline problems:

> I don't like it. I don't like having to discipline and I think that it's not always the child's fault. There's other factors involved, like what's going on at the time, what are the child's choices, what the atmosphere of the room is like, how the room's set up, stuff like that. It all has to do with it. I think the biggest thing with discipline is the program. Does the program leave itself open to discipline problems or is it structured in such a way as to make discipline problems very, very minimal?

When situations did arise, Leger usually handled them in his characteristically calm manner. In his third week he told me about something which occurred while his faculty consultant was observing him. In fact, it wasn't any one incident as much as a whole morning of "active" children. I arrived at the school on that day just after the morning class had left. While I noted that he looked a little frazzled, he was able to recount the situation in a very calm and collected manner:

> ... it started right when they first sat down. They were just *up* and not paying attention. And I asked them if they had Rowdy Flakes for breakfast this morning instead of Corn Flakes. They said: "No,"

> and proceeded to do other things. Just hard to keep their attention.

Leger used many of the same techniques as Margo when handling (or trying to avoid) discipline problems, notably positive reinforcement or temporary banishment. He rarely raised his voice with the children, and he would spend time talking quietly with a child who had been separated for misbehaving. They would talk about what had happened and discuss acceptable behaviour. But still, he disliked excluding a child because he firmly believed that children learned nothing by sitting in a corner.

By the seventh week he told me that the morning group had been getting progressively worse. He had started taking away certain privileges after his cooperating teacher told him that some of the children actually liked being banished from the circle area. He wasn't pleased about doing this, either.

During this week an incident occurred which had a significant impact on Leger. He found himself harried to the point where his frustrations got the better of him, and what he did caused him a lot of pain. His description of the incident is very revealing of his orientation to young children and to teaching at the kindergarten level:

> I blew up at one of the kids. He was supposed to be sitting there. I said (loudly): "________, what are you doing? You're supposed to be sitting here thinking about what you're doing!" He was playing. "Put that away!" And then afterwards I went to talk to him and he wouldn't talk to me, and I asked him why. He said: "I'm scared." "Why are you scared?" "Because you'll yell at me." The I realized I'd done the worst thing you could ever do. I was *towering* above him, looking down at him, and yelling at him. And I realized: "You monster." And I apologized *profusely* to him and said: "Oh ________, I'm so sorry." I explained to him why I did it, said I was getting very upset

> and I didn't mean to, and I never want to do that again.

In his log that evening he wrote that he also apologized to the entire class for his outburst. He ended the entry for that day by stating: "This definitely was not one of my better days." This was an unusual situation, for Leger rarely lost his temper.

There was an incident during his last week where the children were being rowdy and his cooperating teacher intervened. He said she "blew up" at the children and told them that they were lucky that Mr. _________ was teaching them (Leger didn't know whether to interpret this as praise or criticism). After this happened the children were quiet for a short while, then quickly returned to their old ways. Leger was almost pleased when this happened because it reinforced his views that yelling at children is ineffective. He continued to focus on structural elements as the critical factor in creating problem situations and also continued to feel that, for the duration of the practicum, this factor was unfortunately beyond his control.

Secondary Informants. Dealing with discipline problems was something all the secondary informants had to face. Although no one seemed to experience any major difficulties, even one deviant child could be enough to spoil an otherwise pleasant situation. It was even worse if it occurred when someone was watching, for this seemed to immediately call into question the issue of competence. There was no doubt that most of the students developed a sense of their own ability as classroom teachers based, in large part, on how their children responded to them.

Janet, Holly, Dana, Mardi, Gwen and Jill all referred to one or two of the children as little "hellions" (although not necessarily by this term). All these cases sounded like the sort of thing Margo experienced. It wasn't as if the whole class was "antsy" (as Melinda's class had been). It was, rather, the presence of one or two catalystic individuals who disrupted a lesson and caused the teacher to take corrective action.

Holly spoke of one boy who always said "no." It didn't seem to matter-what she asked of him, he would refuse. She framed the problem in terms of winning and losing. If she allowed him to goad her into losing her temper and yelling, he would "win." Consequently, for him to "lose," she had to remain calm. This was essentially how she dealt with him. But near the end of the practicum she got so fed up that she told him that "if he didn't clean up his act he'd be eating my fist in a little while." That worked.

Janet also spoke of one particular problem child. How she dealt with him clearly called into question (for her) her competence as a teacher and her confidence in her own abilities. At the midpoint of the practicum she told me that she resisted removing him from the rest of the children out of fear that he would refuse and she "might lose the group." By the end of March she was still experiencing difficulties with him and it obviously preyed on her: "The thought of being manipulated by a five year old just makes me ill." She was finally forced to send him home on one occasion.

Anise mentioned one or two "trouble-makers" when the topic of child behaviour arose in conversation. At the end of her second week she spoke of a boy who hit her with his knapsack four times and told her she didn't know anything. Anise felt that he was just testing her, and was appalled when her cooperating teacher sent him to the office to be strapped. She rejected corporal punishment out of hand and wanted nothing to do with it.

She mentioned how pleased everyone was when one problem child (a boy she described as a catalyst) went to

Europe for a vacation with his family: "Made us all feel good." She then added: "The bad news is he's coming back." She described how well the classes went for an entire week in his absence.

Anise was particularly sensitive to discipline situations which arose when she was being observed. She told me of one little girl who dropped scissors on the floor while they (Anise included) were working at a table. Her faculty consultant was present and she sensed he was listening. Anise told to girl to say "sorry." She refused. "O.K., we'll just sit here til you say 'sorry.'" She threatened to send her to the principal and the girl apologized. As in Holly's situation, this became a case of who was going to "win."

Jill mentioned a "hellion" in her afternoon group. Apparently, he was as bright as he was trying and he could, Jill said, be abusive. On one occasion she said that he told the cooperating teacher: "Tomorrow I will bring a gun and I will shoot you." But she added that he was never this bad with her.

At the end of her fifth week Mardi told me about one boy who would only play at one centre and not listen to instructions. Try as she might to redirect his interests, he'd always return to the same area. She found this trying and didn't know what to do with him: "By the end of the day I'm ready to hang him."

Dana didn't isolate any one individual, but spoke of times when the kids went "crazy." As the practicum progressed some of the children became "wilder" and she drew a causal link between this and the approach of Spring Break. She would separate problem children from the rest when they became boisterous or aggressive. And while she never spoke of discipline problems in a way that overtly revealed her concern, I suspected that misbehaviour bothered her. She was quick to offer an explanation when problems arose, as if it were perfectly natural and expected, and something with which she simply had to cope. She seemed to define this as all part of being a teacher.

Subtle Modifications

I have already mentioned the overwhelming sense of a need for conformity that the key informants experienced. They simply did not feel it was their place to experiment, nor did they feel it would benefit the children (in the short term) to substantially alter their routine. Nevertheless, I also noted instances where their backgrounds in Early Childhood came to the fore, sometimes in the form of recommendations to the cooperating teacher, and sometimes in the shape of real actions. When I say that their university background "came to the fore," I am referring specifically to aspects of their professional preparation which conflicted with what they witnessed or experienced in the schools; where they actually attempted or realized a change in some structural aspect of classroom life.

In most cases this was very subtle. Radical change was simply not a reality of student teaching. But there were instances where individuals took the initiative and, however slightly, confronted the established routine. In one case, Melinda's, an instance of change was more than subtle. Had it taken place in any of the other three classrooms it likely would have gone unnoticed. But because of the structural arrangements of Melinda's situations, it was a significant departure. [This will be described later.]

Once again Becky is not part of this discussion. I didn't notice any instances, nor did any arise in conversation, where she departed from established procedure. She claimed that she agreed fundamentally with her cooperating teacher's arrangements. She also made it clear that she wouldn't challenge the status quo.

Leger, of course, was fundamentally opposed to much of what he saw and did in his classroom. At the same time, he felt powerless to change it and, even if given the opportunity, likely would have made only minor modifications for the sake of the children. Yet I sensed from the very first week that he was committed to realizing, albeit in subtle ways, a greater degree of child-centred instruction as he defined it. The implication was hidden in a comment he made during my initial visit:

> It's not going to be as bad as I thought. As long as I don't do anything that's going to jeopardize, like say: "*That* is stupid." As long as I don't come right out and say that's stupid. And be careful how I say: "Well, I'd like to change something," to better suit my philosophy. As long as I'm careful in doing that I think it'll work O.K.

And that's what he did. He was very cautious not to appear critical of the structural arrangements in the room. But his commitment to the Early Childhood ideology was such that he endeavoured to make minor modifications which he defined as being in the best interests of the children. The following situation typifies the way he went about doing this.

During the fifth week he was doing one of the routine instructional tasks expected of him: conducting a lesson on the letter of the day. On this day it was the letter "R" and he described the way he went about it:

> I did it *basically* the same way. I introduced it and we talked about it, but what I did instead of doing a worksheet was have the children make their own pictures, make their own "R's." They all did it

> themselves, and they did their own printing. When they drew something they had to tell me what it was. Then I would say: "O.K., we have to make sure we remember what this is. So this is how you print 'rainbow.'" So I'd show the child how to print "rainbow," and then they'd take it away and print it on their own, the way they wanted to.

The alteration to the routine, as he noted, was in the substitution of drawing and printing for the worksheet activity. Leger felt this approach put more emphasis on each child's creativity and gave them more chance for self expression.

It was through subtlety like this that Leger gave vent to his own convictions. On one occasion, while doing the letter "X," he took the kids on a "mini field trip" down the school corridors to observe exit signs. He hadn't planned it; it just seemed to be an appropriate thing to do at the time. It was his way of providing the children with first-hand experience.

In addition, he tried to ensure that each class had a full forty-five minutes of centre time.

Margo tended to adhere closely to the curricular framework established by her cooperating teacher. But she didn't hide her views on schooling, and at one point during the practicum engaged in a discussion with her teacher on the philosophy of learning centres. Her cooperating teacher frequently established compulsory centres (commonly math and language) and although the children could play at any of the other centres, they *had* to visit the two mandatory ones at some point during the allotted time. Margo was not particularly enamoured with this approach and subtly made her views known. She described the situation:

> I've talked with [my cooperating teacher]. I guess kids go where they know their skills need to be developed. If a child goes to

> the play centre that's where he needs to be, to have practice and experience. Some kids go to the challenge table - the higher level activities - because that's where their level is at.

I asked how her cooperating teacher reacted to this. She replied:

> Well, she agreed to a point. But she says, coming the end of the term, it's really important for them to really focus on some of those skills because they're mandatory for grade one. And I could see what she was saying ... I can kind of see it, but I don't hound on the kids. I usually ask them: "Have you done two centres?" and I'll ask them which ones, and if they tell me I'll let them go. Or if they did one and they did science or something, I'll let them go.

So because she viewed things slightly differently, Margo didn't enforce her cooperating teacher's rules on centre use quite as rigidly as might have been expected of her.

Beyond this, Margo would offer suggestions that, if accepted by her cooperating teacher, brought about subtle alterations to established practice. The following example was typical of her approach to change:

> I kind of throw a few suggestions here and there, like, we were doing the pharmacy (centre) ... and I says: "Oh, why don't we have some papers so the kids can write prescriptions on?" (Her cooperating teacher responded) "Oh, yeh, we can do that," you know, and the kids use it all morning. My focus is getting a lot more writing in.

In this sense Margo and Leger shared a similar orientation to change. Both wished to place more emphasis on child-directed activities without implying, through their words and actions, that the existing arrangements were flawed. I have no reason to believe that this wouldn't have continued, and perhaps increased, had the practicum extended beyond the eight week duration.

The first time that Melinda mentioned the possibility of deviating from her routine was during the fourth week, just after her midterm evaluation. And this was more in the form of what she *wanted* to do rather than what was feasible. While she did not once key in on structural elements as a possible explanation of behaviour problems, or make critical comments about the structuring of the children's school day, she did feel that incorporating learning centres into the timetable would be beneficial for the children. In fact, she referred to it as a way of making learning fun. I asked her if she had thought about that at all during the first four weeks (it had never come up in conversation). She replied:

> (long pause) Well I thought that originally I might have the opportunity to develop learning centres but I don't think the resources are there. The classroom just isn't set up to facilitate a learning centre.

I asked if she'd mentioned learning centres to her cooperating teacher. She responded negatively, and added that, on top of everything else, she didn't have the time to plan centre activities.

In light of this, I was surprised when I visited her in the sixth week to find that she had set up a math centre at the back of the room. Melinda's purpose for this centre was to provide an opportunity for the children to experiment with measuring, weighing, comparing and balancing prior to the introduction to these concepts in their math textbooks. The centre wasn't elaborate, just a container full of aquarium rocks, some empty vessels, a set of scales, and some jars containing varying amounts of Plasticine. And as

I mentioned previously, it would have gone unnoticed in the other three classrooms. But here it stood out, not so much the centre itself, but the fact that the children were getting up from their seats and "playing" at the back of the room. This might have been expected behaviour during art, but for math it was a significant departure.

It is interesting to note how the centre evolved, for it provides some insight into Melinda's pedagogical orientation. Apparently it was a suggested activity in one of her curriculum manuals, but she told me that she had modified it. When I heard this I, for some reason, assumed that she meant she had eliminated some of the structure recommended in the manual. But, in fact, she had provided *more* structure by adding a worksheet activity. Her rationale for doing this reminded me of a comment Holly had made weeks before regarding her desire for more control over classroom activities:

> The worksheet was my own invention. There were some suggested task ideas for each centre (there were actually *two* activities at the centre) and then I thought: "Well, if the kids are working there all on their own how am I going to know they're benefiting or what they're doing?" So I thought: "Why not throw in a worksheet," then it's not so much a matter of whether they get it right or wrong, but just to let me know where they're at.

The centre was dismantled after all the children had had an opportunity to visit it (only two or three could work there at one time).

I asked Melinda how her cooperating teacher had reacted to her math centre. She replied, hesitantly: "I *think* quite well actually." [Melinda had been quite concerned about the numerous rocks scattered over the floor at the end of each day, but it didn't seem to worry her cooperating teacher. In fact, she recommended that Melinda leave the math centre in place for an additional week.] I also inquired about the response from the children. There was no hesitation this time: "I can't keep them away from there, which is good!"

She didn't establish any other centres. But while it existed the math centre, *even though suggested in the curriculum manual*, represented a significant deviation from normal classroom practice.

Secondary Informants. There is very little which I can say about the extent to which the secondary informants intentionally attempted to modify the structural elements present in their situations and I have already stated that all of them adhered quite strictly to the general frameworks which they inherited. But I can add that as our conversations continued I formed an impression that some of them readily accepted aspects of established practice without critical appraisal, while others believed that certain features of pedagogy in their respective situations were inappropriate. A few of these were "driven" to attempt some change, however subtle.

It would be a gross oversimplification to suggest that the extent to which any of the informants attempted structural change was proportional to the degree to which they subscribed to a child-centred pedagogy and identified conflict in their situations. Other factors also influenced this: the way they defined their relationships with their cooperating teachers, their extent of self-assuredness, whether they believed that deviation would negatively affect their evaluation, their concern for causing confusion among the children, and personality factors which influenced their approach to confrontation with others. But it was the rift between subscribing to an open classroom ideology and their being placed in (what was defined as) a structured setting that appeared to be the major factor which caused some of the student teachers to instigate structural change.

Anise spoke of attempting "to put a little more fun" into some of her cooperating teacher's habits, and Jill mentioned doing some things her own way. But Cathy stands alone, even when key informants like Leger and Margo are included, in her efforts to assert herself and bring her own ideas to the student teaching situation. While I never observed her in the classroom, the topic arose so regularly in conversation that I am convinced of her sincerity. She was not the type to intentionally distort the facts as she understood them.

To encapsulate her situation, Cathy, like everyone else, abided by existing practice to a large extent. As she commented earlier: "I'll do what she says. She's the person who gives me my mark." But, still, she adamantly continued her subtle attempts to bring more of herself into the teaching situation. By the end of her third week she told me that she was experiencing a "slight" conflict with her cooperating teacher on this issue. She said that she asserted herself when her teacher was absent, or when she was dealing in an area that was a weakness for her teacher, such as movement. But in both these situations and in others, she attempted to do what she thought right for the children. At the end of March she did a language experience chart with the class, even though her cooperating teacher was "leery" of it, and it went very well (in fact, her consultant asked to use a portion of it in her own research at the university). It was also around this time that she had the previously mentioned confrontation with her teacher, the result of which earned her a little more freedom of expression.

In the end, although she felt she had made some gains, she still described herself as having generally conformed to the established structure. In some ways she may have paid a temporary price for her persistence. Her midterm evaluation was lower than she expected, and she felt she had deserved better. But she described the straight fives she received from her faculty consultant on the final evaluation as a "real boost," and she was also pleased with her teacher's assessment. In spite of the fact that both her cooperating teacher and her faculty consultant held conflicting views on appropriate pedagogy, *both* gave her perfect scores.

Student Teaching As Performance

In his classic work on everyday interaction, Erving Goffman (1959:22) defined human "performance" as: "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers." In so defining performance, he laid the groundwork for an elaborate description of the way individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them.

Student teaching may readily be conceptualized as a type of performance. Education students are placed in a field situation where they are expected to practice and refine their pedagogical skills before the watchful eyes of an experienced practitioner. They undergo formal assessments at the end of this experience, and are well aware that the outcome of this evaluation can significantly influence their budding careers as teachers. In these circumstances, the *sense* of performing may be intensified beyond the everyday situations described by Goffman, because student teachers are being *formally evaluated*.

In this study, the *sense* of performing was intricately interwoven with the *sense* of being evaluated. Consequently, the concern about "having to perform" cropped up in conversation more readily with Margo and Melinda than it did with Leger and Becky. It was inherent in Leger's and Becky's situations (ostensibly less so for Becky) in so far as they went along (conformed) with structural arrangements they might otherwise have altered. For Melinda and Margo, however, the "need to perform" was amplified as a result of constant scrutiny, especially by the cooperating teacher. It grew to be a stressful experience, for the performance they enacted was one they might not have done had they been alone with the children. In the following statement Melinda revealed how she felt:

> Sometimes it just gets tiring being underneath someone all the time. Having to perform for someone else. I guess you'll never totally be out of that, because I mean [there's always] the superintendent and all that. But cooperating teacher and student teacher ... that's pretty close.

When Melinda was unable to create the impression she wanted to create, she would become upset, particularly if the children misbehaved while her cooperating teacher was watching. It was at times like these that the *sense* of performing was most acute. And when things went well, her sense of satisfaction was heightened if her cooperating teacher had been observing. She told me of one instance where she was able to establish order, but that her cooperating teacher was out of the room. The children were being especially unruly:

> I had to bring them in to read them a story and they just settled down and didn't make a peep. And I've never had them be so good for a story. And, of course, that was a time when [my cooperating teacher] wasn't there to see. So in that sense it's too bad, but you can't win either way I guess.

Margo's situation was similar. I have previously described her sense of "feeling like a student" or being scrutinized by "an eagle eye." To her, it was like being on stage. The feeling diminished when her cooperating teacher was absent. She described one such situation for me, and her sense of relief as she told the story was obvious:

> Yesterday [my cooperating teacher] took off most of the afternoon, and I quite liked that. Then I know I do what I feel like doing and I know what I feel like doing is what I want to do... Do you know what I'm saying?

It wasn't so much the "having to perform" that was trying, for we all do that on a regular basis. It was *constantly* having to perform - each day, all day - that became very tedious and frustrating. At the times when they felt they weren't being scrutinized, the *sense* of performance was lessened.

Secondary Informants. I have previously stated that I think drama is something in which we all engage in the course of daily social interaction. But I also think there is a heightened awareness of performance when we are under close scrutiny, particularly when we believe the results of such scrutiny will influence future aspirations.

To the extent to which the above comment is a credible interpretation of human behaviour, all the students were performing. But, considering Anise's focus on marks, her awareness of it was more evident in conversation than with the others. It came through strongly in one particular description. We spoke on the telephone at the end of March, and she told me of her behaviour during a visit from her faculty consultant when the children were doing crafts:

> He hasn't seen me teach. Being one of three (with the cooperating teacher and the aide) going through a craft isn't a big deal. And I was sort of on edge because you don't want to...[over-dramatize]...too much. It'd be

> so easy to go (in a high-pitched, enacted voice): "Oh, you darling, just a tremendous ..." and that's not me. You say: "Oh, isn't that special" or whatever, but you don't go on and on and on. So I have to be sure that I don't...[over-dramatize]...but also that I don't over-compensate for this.

She was very conscious of her behaviour in the repeated presence of her faculty consultant. She didn't want to put on a show that would not reflect her "real self" as she perceived it, yet at the same time didn't want to suppress aspects of her "normal" behaviour in her attempts to control the temptation to overdo it. In short, she wanted to present herself in the best possible light without moving into the realm of mendacity.

The Theory/Practice Issue

There is abundant reference in the literature on teacher education to an apparent rift between preservice preparation and inservice teaching. A general image has been created and perpetuated in which university coursework is somehow providing a false or misleading account of classroom practice; that what is taught at a university is of little use in the schools.

While conducting this study, I noted that this dichotomous relationship between the university and the schools was reinforced in the minds of some of the student teachers, notably Leger and Becky. Being in a *real* classroom, dealing with *real* problems and instructing *real* children occasionally caused the students to reflect on the (university) classroom portion of their professional preparation.

Leger didn't totally dismiss his university preparation, and he felt that much of what he learned in courses (such as Early Childhood) was stored in his mind and that he was probably using it subconsciously. But he felt ill-prepared for some of the specific demands made of him. This feeling was probably exaggerated by the fact that he was teaching in an inner city school where some of the children spoke halting English and came from relatively poor circumstances. He made the following comment after having been at the school less than two weeks:

> There's a lot they don't tell you in university. A lot: Things about ... worrying if kids had their breakfast and what to do if they hadn't had their breakfast. Do you give them an extra snack? Going swimming ... worrying if kids know how to put their pants on the right way. And they *don't*.

For him, much about teaching had to be learned through first-hand experience:

> One of the realities I've found ... you've got all this good information but if you don't know how to get it across to that child, you're lost. And if that child doesn't speak English you've got to find another way to get it across. So that's reality. They don't tell you that in school (university). They don't tell you that you're going to be in an area where there are forty-seven different nationalities, and some of them don't eat meat, some of them don't celebrate birthdays, some of them don't do this ... You're not told this. You have to find that out for yourself.

Becky also agreed. To her, teaching in a school setting meant learning skills in a meaningful way. She didn't discard university coursework totally, emphasizing that *some* of the C and I (curriculum and instruction) courses and educational psychology were useful (contained practical information). But the classroom was the real thing:

> To tell you the very honest total truth, I don't learn a lot at university. (I ask if she knows why) No, not really. If you ask me how they could plan something that would be *better* I could probably give you *some* suggestions, but I really don't know if I would learn a lot more. I learned a lot through the paper that I wrote (assignment # 3) because I had to go into the classroom and work with the teacher, work with the kids, and do it from there. But as far as the (university) classroom goes ... I really don't learn a lot. The sharing you do we do with each other anyway at coffee time or whatever. And as far as the centres and things that [Dr. Mullen] has set up, you don't even spend enough time with them to really get anything out of them. You write down the names of the books, the authors, and probably never look at them again as long as you live. So I don't learn a lot there. I think practical is so much more important. It's much more meaningful.

When I met with three of the four key informants well after the practicum had ended, we had a lengthy discussion about the differences between the world of the university classroom and the world of the classroom teacher. There was general agreement that much of what was taught in education classes was not particularly relevant or applicable in schools. At the core of much of the debate was the "idealistic" nature of the Early Childhood philosophy. Margo stated the question that seemed to be on everyone's mind: "You question all these wonderful films we saw of open classrooms. How practical are they?" A few moments later she answered her own question: "We can't use it at all."

Secondary Informants. Of the eight secondary informants only two (Anise and Cathy) were supportive of the sorts of activities in which they engaged during university classes. Anise commented that she felt the university work helped as she got further into the program. She tended to view it as somewhat idealistic, but felt that this was how it should be. Her biggest complaint was that so many of the "don'ts" she learned at university were evident in practice. On the coursework: "That's all fine and dandy, but that's not being applied that I can see." If anything, she tended to be more critical of the practice of teaching rather than the theory of it. She certainly didn't seem to experience the disillusionment that Leger felt, and she didn't blame the university (in the sense of not preparing her) for any discrepancy she noted. [As a footnote, I might add that Anise was very academically inclined.]

Cathy also felt that some courses were quite helpful, especially those she defined as "practical." She made special mention of an educational psychology course on classroom management, the early childhood course she had just finished, and movement classes. She didn't speak disparagingly of other courses but it was clear that she had engaged in some form of a practical/theory sifting process.

For the rest, most of what occurred at university was labelled as impractical, or at least its practical uses were not apparent. Dana was undoubtedly the most fervent of this group. At the end of her second week she commented: "I'm realizing something about university, that I've been through three years and I haven't learned a damn thing." She did, however, isolate her resource file as beneficial. Of the practicum she felt that she had learned more in two weeks of practice teaching than in three years of studying.

Both Janet and Holly felt that university played little part in helping one develop oneself as a teacher. They preferred to believe instead that teaching skills are inborn. As Holly said: "You got it or you don't."

They both strongly sensed a need for an emphasis on the concrete (practical) rather than the abstract (theoretical) and both thought they would like to see "more of what to do with kids." And as if to underscore the importance of the practicum, Janet referred to university learnings as "head knowledge," i.e., information that was useless in the absence of a forum in which to apply it.

Comments from the rest of the informants were similar. Most could identify certain classes that provided practical information, but by and large they didn't feel that university work had been of great benefit.

Synopsis of Issues and Concerns

Major Themes

Role Definition: A Tendency to Conform

- All of the student teachers viewed themselves as guests in the classrooms of their cooperating teachers. Defining themselves in the status of student teacher meant filling a role which was subservient to the regular classroom teacher. Consequently, they felt obliged to abide by existing structural arrangements, even though these were frequently at variance with personally-held perspectives on curriculum and pedagogy.

- Conformity was also an issue because of a concern for the children. The student teachers came to understand that marked deviation from an established routine could be confusing and disorienting for the children.

- A further factor encouraging conformity was evaluation. All of the student teachers defined the outcome of this experience - in terms of the assessments they received - as crucial to their future aspirations. For most, this meant doing largely what they perceived their cooperating teacher (and faculty consultant) expected of them.

- The majority of the student teachers claimed that, given their own classrooms, they would structure the children's time differently.

The Cooperating Teacher: A Focal Position

- Each of the student teachers felt that a major factor affecting their experience was the nature of their relationship with their cooperating teacher.

- The cooperating teachers appeared to play a pivotal role in defining the relationship with their student teachers. In situations such as Margo's and Melinda's, the relationship was shaped along what might be termed master-apprentice lines, where one was clearly the senior teacher and the other clearly the student teacher. In other instances, notably Becky's, the relationship was defined more as a collegial, amicable one.

- In the majority of cases, student teachers criticized their cooperating teachers for practicing techniques which conflicted with the open classroom approach advocated in Early Childhood classes. This criticism was rarely (except in Cathy's case) overt.

- Cooperating teachers were also occasionally criticized for the way in which they conducted themselves in their relationship with their student teachers. This was especially true in situations where student teachers were not given the sort of classroom responsibility they felt they deserved, or where their contribution to discussions of class activities was defined as minimal.

- Some of the things which caused criticism of certain teachers were the same things which generated praise for others. Some cooperating teachers were admired for the way they went about being teachers, or for the extent to which they made their student teachers feel a part of the classroom. There was no better example of this than the example Becky's teacher set.

The Faculty Consultant: Role Ambiguity

- The single most contentious issue for some of the student teachers was that their faculty consultants' expectations for classroom practice clashed with those of their cooperating teachers. In some cases (Becky, Melinda, Cathy, Janet) this created a difficult, stressful situation as student teachers attempted to satisfy diverse demands.

- The issue of frequency of contact was also raised. Many of the student teachers saw their consultants so infrequently that it put the necessity of the role in question.

- In situations where the faculty consultant was a help to the student teacher (e.g., Margo and her consultant) the key factor appeared to be how the consultant interpreted the role of "consultant." An absence of unrealistic expectations and a desire to help the student teachers within the context of their placements were obviously considered to be important.

Evaluation: Under the Microscope

- The experience of being evaluated appeared to evolve out of the way in which evaluation occurred. Most of the students became uncomfortable under close, constant scrutiny. Many claimed not to feel relaxed. This made them question the extent to which they were "being themselves."

- Predictably, being observed was stressful when things didn't go as planned. Inattentiveness and misbehaviour from the children placed the student teachers in a situation where their competence was called into question. At times like these the issue became a matter of "winning" and "losing" and of saving face.

- Even though regular evaluation became trying for some, an absence of feedback from the cooperating teacher also caused concern. Student teachers wanted to have a sense of where they stood at all times (i.e., how well they were doing), and when cooperating teachers gave few comments some imagined this indicated problems (although it rarely did).

- All of the student teachers were very pragmatic about evaluation. Their goal was to emerge after eight weeks with nothing but fives, from both evaluators, on the final evaluation form. This was defined as being absolutely essential to securing a regular teaching position. [A few days prior to first writing this section (ten months after the conclusion of the fieldwork) I encountered Bobbie in a university cafeteria. I hadn't observed her during the practicum, but I had heard that she had experienced some difficulties. We were chatting about the student teaching experience and she told me that one week before the conclusion of the practicum she said to her cooperating teacher (approximate recall): "Am I going to get all fives? Tell me now, because if not I'll quit and do it over again."]

- In situations (such as Becky's and, I suspect, Mardi's) where the relationship between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher was amicable and collegial, the experience of evaluation involved much less tension.

Minor Themes

Controlling the Children

- Problems with classroom management appeared to spotlight the issue of competence for many of the student teachers. Most judged themselves as teachers in large part on how the children responded to them and their efforts. Thus, a good lesson occurred when the children were involved and attentive; a lesson interrupted by restless children was considered to be a poor one.

- For many of the student teachers it was only one or two children who were causing problems by misbehaving. These children were catalysts. They could distract the other children and disrupt the flow of a lesson. Dealing with them became a matter of winning or losing; of being seen as in control (and thus competent) or losing the whole group.

Subtle Modifications

- In spite of the constraint the student teachers felt as a result of their percieved need to conform, some of them attempted to realize subtle change in situations where they opposed existing practice.

- Such change was usually undertaken by making minor structural alterations in favor of (what they defined as) a more child-centred approach to learning. With the exception of Cathy, this did not involve (intentionally) an open confrontation with the cooperating teacher. Instead, the changes took the form of seemingly innocuous deletions or insertions in an existing routine.

Student Teaching As Performance

- Other than the personal growth they gained as teachers, most of the students felt that their primary purpose during the practicum was to create a favorable impression of their teaching skills in the minds of (most importantly) the cooperating teacher and the faculty consultant. In this sense they were performing or, as Goffman (1959:15) describes it, trying to control the impressions others formed of them.

- The awareness of performance seemed to be interwoven with the sense of being evaluated. Close scrutiny made most student teachers very conscious of their own actions.

- Misbehaviour on the part of the children caused performances to go awry, and forced student teachers to take corrective action to bring the situation under control.

The Theory/Practice Issue

- Most of the student teachers defined the practicum as representing the "real world" of teaching.

This was where one learned the mechanics of teaching.

- For most, university coursework was considered to be of little value in preparing them as teachers.

Chapter Summary

The chapter began with brief descriptions of the placements of each of the four key informants. Included was a brief account of each student teacher's initial reaction to their settings.

Most of the chapter was devoted to an identification and description of "issues and concerns" which became apparent to me through my association with the informants. These were divided into major and minor themes depending on the extent to which they were shared by the student teachers. The four major themes centered on the strong tendency of the Early Childhood students to conform to the structural elements in their situations in spite of their personal views, the importance of the cooperating teacher to the nature of each student's experience, the frequent difficulties with faculty consultants, and the effect their relationships with cooperating teachers and consultants had on the evaluation experience. The minor themes focused on issues of discipline, attempts by some of the informants to subtly change some aspects of their situations, the extent to which student teaching may be viewed as a performance, and comments made which reinforce the notion of a theory-practice dichotomy in teacher education.

The next chapter provides a discussion of the central points raised in chapters 4 and 5, utilizing certain concepts from symbolic interactionism.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS: WAYS OF VIEWING THE EXPERIENCE

Introduction

The assumptions I have made about the individuals in this study, and which have guided both data collection and data analysis, have reflected a symbolic interactionist perspective on everyday life (see Blumer, 1969:2; Denzin, 1978:7). I have assumed that reality is socially constructed, such that individuals define and re-define their circumstances based on the meaning they ascribe to the various events and objects which constitute their social world. I have assumed that individuals are self-reflexive, that is, they are capable of constructing and guiding their own behaviour. And I have taken interaction to be symbolic in that it requires the use and manipulation of verbal and non-verbal symbols. This is not, however, a study of symbolic interaction *per se*, but rather an inquiry utilizing some of its concepts and constructs to come to some degree of understanding of human experience, in this case, professional preparation. This provides a great deal of flexibility, for interactionism is, as Ian Craib describes it, the least-developed of all the major social theories (Craib, 1984:71).

Core concepts of the interactionist perspective are used throughout this study. Concepts such as interaction, attitude, role, self and performance can be found throughout this work. Many of these are employed in the following discussion. But the chapter has primarily been organized around the core concepts of definition of the situation and socialization.

Definition of the situation is a central focus of this chapter as it became apparent time and again during the conduct of this inquiry that it was an important component of the teacher education experience, indeed, of the human experience. The ways in which students defined and re-defined the nature of their situations had a significant impact on the way in which they experienced and dealt with the university-based and school-based segments of the academic term.

The first three sections of this chapter are structured around this term. The first section, titled "The Definition of the Situation," provides a brief introduction to the meaning of the concept as it is employed in interactionist terminology. The second section, "Being A Student," focuses on the ways in which the Early Childhood students with whom I associated frequently defined the student experience. The third section, "Being A Student Teacher," focuses in the same way on the eight weeks of practice teaching. Throughout both of these last two sections I have woven relevant information derived from my readings in the literature on teacher education.

Definition of the situation is embedded within the broader concept of socialization. In the fourth section, titled "A Few Comments on Socialization and Professional Preparation," I have attempted to "stand back" - to move beyond the "small social worlds" (Rock, 1979:92) which dominate interactionist studies - and view the teacher education experience as a process of socialization. This was not an originally stated purpose of the study, but I have chosen to include it as my association with the Early Childhood students made me realize that individuals exert a great deal of control over their socialization. This is frequently overlooked in the teacher education literature. I have drawn on a section of the sociological literature on socialization theory, and the teacher education literature which speaks to this issue, in an effort to better understand the *process* of professional preparation. While I think this issue is an important one, I fully recognize that my discussion is limited by the fact that I only spent one academic term with these prospective teachers.

In a fifth section, titled "Implications for the Design of Teacher Education Programs," I briefly discuss the significance the findings of this study may have for the professional preparation of teachers.

The chapter closes with "Conclusions" and "Future Considerations." Both have been incorporated into this chapter as they follow directly from the analysis and discussion.

Before embarking on a discussion of the data presented in the previous two chapters, I wish to add a further note of explanation about what follows. Robert Tabachnick (1981:77), in an article critical of much that has passed as research in teacher education, deplores the way in which many social scientists have "shattered" social interaction into dependent and independent variables. I have avoided such an orientation in the conduct of this study, for it is my belief that the social world is far too complex to be represented in this fashion. At the same time, however, research of this type has somewhat similar limitations. In order to make a study such as this feasible, it is necessary to narrow the scope of the inquiry while it is in progress. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982:146) point out, what starts out as a broad focus for data collection becomes more focused as the researcher spends more and more time in the field. This means, of course, that some aspects of the social world are investigated while others are ignored, or at least given scant attention. Such was the case in this study. Thus, I am fully cognizant of the fact that the data I have presented in the previous two chapters and the discussion which follows represent only a glimpse into the world of teacher education, and by that very fact, an oversimplification if understood otherwise. I do not mean this as an apology - it isn't. Instead, it is a statement of personal belief about social research.

The Definition of the Situation

One of the most frequently cited statements in the literature on symbolic interactionism is the assertion by William and Dorothy Thomas (1928:572) that "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." This statement underscores one of the foundation principles on interactionism - that individuals attach meaning to the objects and events in their environments through an interpretive process that preceeds action.

The definition of the situation refers to the way individuals take account of the various elements in their immediate situations in order to decide upon appropriate behaviours. As Laurel and Handel (1983:127) note, this involves representing the situation "to the self symbolically so that a response can be made." How these situations are defined is influenced by a host of factors: the goals one has for a particular situation, the application of perspectives we have developed from previous interaction, and the view one has of one's self in that setting. Consequently, and of significance to the interactionist perspective, different people may define similar situations differently.

Defining a situation involves labelling others in the setting. Charon (1979:136) points out that this occasionally involves the application of stereotypes which an individual may refuse to change regardless of the course of the interaction. More commonly, however, situations are defined and re-defined as all of those involved take account of the actions of others.

Situations may also be defined intentionally, and this is particularly relevant here. Individuals pursuing particular goals will attempt to influence the definitions of others. This may be achieved by what one chooses to say, by how it is said, by certain physical gestures and even by choice of clothing. This is especially relevant in Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach to interactionism. The use of the drama metaphor is founded on the concept of impression management, that individuals attempt to guide and influence the impressions others form of them. I have no doubt that all of my informants engaged in intentional definition of the situation in an attempt to influence the views their cooperating teachers, faculty consultants and children had of them. [It was less apparent in the university classroom setting where students were frequently more willing to confront the instructor when they disagreed with something.]

These various aspects of defining situations are present in this study. The ways in which the university coursework was defined influenced students' work habits and served as a basis for praise and criticism. The way in which the relationships were defined with cooperating teachers and faculty consultants had an impact on the nature of each student's experience. And overall goals for both coursework and practice teaching caused students to attempt to intentionally define situations for significant others.

Being A Student

In chapter 4 I presented data on the university classroom experiences of the Early Childhood students. The chapter was largely structured about various issues and concerns which became evident through my association with these students. Six issues and concerns were identified: "The Structure of Learning Environments," "Schedule Pressure," "Concern for Marks," "All That is Practical," "Required Activities," and "Anticipating the Practicum." In the discussion which follows I have attempted to understand these issues and concerns through the way in which these students defined the various aspects of university coursework. This discussion assumes that the reader has read Chapter 4.

Some of the data presented in Chapter 4 will be discussed later when the focus turns to socialization. Notable here is the material relating to the structure of learning environments, and the times during which the status of "student" was accentuated through contact with the "real world" of teachers and classrooms (in the conduct of certain Early Childhood assignments). At this point, however, I wish to discuss two definitions of the situation which most of the students held, both of which centre on the concept of "practicality."

Practical, in one sense, meant what was and what was not necessary for a teacher to know. From Chapter 4 certain of the data point in this direction:

- students frequently referred to the desire for "practical" knowledge. This was invariably contrasted with "theoretical" knowledge.

- sharing time during Early Childhood classes was popular because of the "practical" benefits students could derive from it. Items were noted by the students for the purpose of building a resource file. Some referred to this information as "recipes."

- class presentations were considered valuable by some as they provided a wealth of practical information that would otherwise have taken hours of library work to uncover.

- some of the EdAdmin course content was identified as "practical," because students "knew" it was the sort of material of which teachers needed to be aware.

At the same time, practical also meant focusing on what was and what was not expedient for students in order to cover the required material and receive an acceptable grade:

- during Early Childhood classes, students tended to concentrate their efforts on those learning centres which had been designated as compulsory.

- students wanted regular numerical feedback in order to assess where they stood, i.e., whether they were "on the right track" to getting an acceptable grade in the courses.

- students regularly questioned instructors and classmates in order to clearly delineate what they had to do on certain assignments and tests. I referred to this in Chapter 4 as "working the system."

- I developed the distinct impression that major papers and assignments were prepared *for* the instructors.

- the desire to do well in the courses contributed to a competitiveness among many students which was particularly noticeable in the preparation of Early Childhood assignments.

- students disliked ambiguity associated with assignments and tests. Uncertainty about the specifics of assignments, "misleading" directions about what to study for quizzes, and quiz questions which were open to diverse interpretations, were all guaranteed to unleash a barrage of criticism and unkind remarks.

This dual focus on practicality indicates that there are at least two definitions of the situation which these students bring to professional preparation. The first is that teacher education will (should) provide them with the "how to" knowledge to be teachers. The second is that how one fares in the courses is important. Both of these are discussed below.

Practical Knowledge

There is a dearth of information focusing on the experiential aspects of the university-based component of professional preparation in the literature on teacher education. Not surprisingly, the practicum has dominated most inquiries (Hersom,1984:255), an implicit recognition of its importance. Even here, data on what it's like to be a student teacher are not abundant. What little does exist on university coursework reveals that many of the individuals who have gone through these programs do not hold the courses in high regard (Joyce and Clift, 1984:5).

One of the pervasive criticisms by teachers of teacher education programs is that insufficient emphasis is given to the practical aspects of teaching (Kushel and Madon, 1974; Lortie, 1975; Miller and Taylor, 1984; Miklos et al., 1987). That is, to the details of how teachers manage classrooms, how they plan lessons and units, how they deal with discipline problems, and how they go about doing all of the other skill-based tasks which regularly confront them. While conducting doctoral research on teacher preparation at a large American university, Sears (1984:174) noted that two-thirds of preservice teachers held a utilitarian orientation to professional preparation, "a 'do what works' philosophy."

These findings concur with the results of this inquiry. The students frequently referred to the need for practical information, that is, information that appeared to have practical application in an instructional setting. This served as an *orientation* to professional preparation, and constitutes the first dimension of practicality. Student expectations for teacher education were that it would provide them with the "how to" skills. The situation was defined as one in which they expected to be "trained" as teachers.

The foundation of this orientation is conceivably two-fold. One explanation is the career orientation of many students entering professional preparation. In fact, Levine (1980) demonstrates that this orientation applies at a more general level to the majority of students entering higher education. He points out that the single greatest change between students entering college in the 1960s and the late 1970s was the emergence of a strong career orientation (Levine, 1980:60). Whereas in 1969 students considered "learning to get along with people" and the "formulation of values and goals" as most important, by 1976 these had been usurped by the demand for occupational skill training (Levine, 1980:60-61). The importance of career development skills was also noted in a study conducted by Weissberg et al. (1982) of undergraduate student needs. William Saunders of Harvard University further noted the strong "careerism" of liberal arts students, causing him to go so far as to suspect that good classroom discussion by students and the preparation of good papers was *just* performance (Saunders, 1981:149). Focusing specifically on teacher education, Tymitz-Wolf (1984) discussed the possible impact of this "new vocationalism" on preservice preparation.

A second possible explanation is found in the assertion by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966:42) that "life is dominated by the pragmatic motive." They suggest that everyday life is governed by the application of, and search for, "recipe knowledge" (interestingly, "recipes" was a term used by some of the Early Childhood students for the information gleaned from their sharing sessions). They talk of basic competencies such as how to use a telephone or how to apply for a passport. They point out that most of us are not interested in *how* a telephone works or *how* a passport is processed by government bureaucrats. We want to execute the skill and reap the benefit.

Teaching skills are not everyday acts in the sense of using a telephone or applying for a passport, at least, not for everybody. They are, however, everyday acts for teachers, and for this reason I suggest that the "pragmatic motive" can be applied in a similar fashion to professional preparation. Education students want to know how to *do* the sorts of things that classroom teachers do:

> ... of all the things in the last two and a half years that we've done, the things that have been most relevant are the practical things we've done. (Dana)
>
> They don't teach you the basics of "this is how you teach." (Leger)

This does not mean that they are disinterested in basic foundation principles. It does suggest, however, that if the *knowing* is not seen to be related to the *doing*, much of this knowledge may be discounted on the grounds that it is not relevant to teaching. This was the case with many of the Early Childhood students, and they articulated it through the use of words such as "practical" and "theoretical." Where content was seen to be usable in an instructional setting, it was "practical." Where its relevance was obscure, it was labelled as "theoretical," or "philosophical." The use of the term "theory" in situations such as these, as Deardon (1984:5) points out, is meant to convey the message that a particular idea is impractical.

It is quite likely that both of these perspectives influence the way many students in professional preparation view their programs. In either case, it raises an interesting question about practical knowledge, one that is highlighted in the following quote from Janet. I had asked her what she meant by the term "practical." Her reply was similar to many others I had heard:

> For myself, if the information is concrete and *I can see that it is very practical* and I can use it in this way or that way, like a resource I need or something; very concrete, not some theory. (emphasis added)

In the italicized portion of this quotation Janet implies that she *knows* what is practical and what is not. How does she know? Aside from a short practicum during the first term of her third year, and occasional classroom visits, she has had little experience as a classroom teacher. Yet she has already developed a sense for what is useful and what is of little value.

A logical interpretation is that she has formed a perspective on the role of teachers and the goings on of elementary classrooms. [I am using the term "perspective" to refer to a set of ideas or a set of assumptions individuals use to order everyday life (Charon, 1979:6-7). He argues that our perspectives influence the way we perceive (or define) situations, and thus influence our actions.] As perspectives are constructed on the basis of experience, we are left to conclude that past experiences have provided her with a sense of what the role of teacher involves. This can be generalized to others. One of the Early Childhood students had had professional experience in a preschool setting. Another had worked as a teacher's aide. All had done some practice teaching. Some had children of their own. These experiences undoubtedly contributed to the perspectives they held on teaching. Beyond this, however, are the years they spent as students themselves in elementary and secondary schools (Eddy, 1969:9; Lortie, 1975:61; Lanier, 1984:54; Denscombe, 1984:208). Lortie (1975:61) refers to this as an "apprenticeship of observation," and he offers some important distinctions about its impact on prospective teachers. He points out that individuals entering other occupations are more likely to realize that what they know about the job is limited. For those entering teaching, however, definite ideas about the nature of the role have been formed (Lortie, 1975:65). But he adds that these ideas are student-oriented. That is, they have viewed teachers from a specific vantage point: an uncritical one. This suggests that prospective teachers likely enter education programs with a well-developed sense for what the teacher *does*, but with a less-developed sense for what a teacher *needs to know*.

Education students have an understanding, albeit largely a student-oriented one, of classroom situations. This understanding or perspective is employed in a "sifting" manner in university classes, i.e., students pass judgement on the content presented based on its relevance to the classroom situation. If it isn't "practical," it's "theoretical."

Not surprisingly, non-education courses, while occasionally identified as "interesting," were invariably labelled by the Early Childhood students as "useless," because their link to the classroom was obscure. The same reasoning was applied to courses in educational foundations, and occasionally educational psychology and educational administration. The curriculum and instruction courses offered the most concrete link with the classroom, so they usually fared better than the others.

Doing Well Overall

Completing the courses with personally satisfactory marks constituted the second dimension of practicality for the students in this study. That is, many defined the situation as one where the short-term objective was to do as well as possible in order to raise or maintain their grade-point average. Some had a much stronger orientation in this regard than others, but most of the students with whom I associated felt that marks, aside from providing a sense of personal satisfaction, would be used by prospective employers in the hiring process:

> ... it is important because ... when we go out and they look at our transcripts, in that way, obviously a four is going to look a lot worse than a nine. They're very important in a job situation. (Janet)

> Marks are important here. That's what people look at is marks. (Holly)

In so saying, I don't wish to imply that students took little personal pride in their achievements or that they gave scant thought to course content and classroom discussions. But there was a strong utilitarian orientation which crept into conversations about marks. Even though marks were frequently seen as false indicators of ability, the "reality" of the situation, as defined by the students, was that they were the major factors in securing employment.

Becker et al. (1968:33-42), in an investigation of the academic life of college students, point out the significance of what they term the "grade-point average perspective." They note that it constitutes a controlling influence on the students (Becker et al., 1968:91):

> ...given the importance of grades and the total control by faculty over the terms of their distribution, students cannot act as autonomous intellectuals, cannot persue learning for its own sake, but must seek information on faculty behaviour, present and prospective, before they can plan what they will do.

Defining expectations was a ubiquitous aspect of student life throughout the academic term (including the practicum). Here they were working the system. Students asked innumerable questions of instructors and of each other in an attempt to clearly delineate what was required and what was superfluous. The need to do this was heightened by the schedule pressures associated with the contracted term. The desire to do well, and the severely limited time in which to do it, meant that available time had to be used wisely and uncertainty concerning expectations had to be eliminated or at least minimized.

Becker et al. (1968:111) noted that the students with whom they associated preferred instructors whose assignments were unambiguous. Such, I found, was also the case with the Early Childhood students. The instructors most frequently criticized on this count were those in EdAdmin. Some of the students felt cheated out of marks by what they defined as ambiguous questions on the two quizzes - notably the true and false questions:

> To me, I debate *everything*. So I get an answer and I go: "Oh, that's obviously true," and I'll write down true. And I'll come back to it and I'll read into it. You've got a fifty-fifty chance ... it can't be that easy, that's my problem, so I debate it. (Janet)

In their view many of the questions were open to diverse interpretation and students getting them wrong were unfortunate to have interpreted them differently than the instructors had. Furthermore, much of what was asked on the quizzes was identified as content never covered in class:

> For me it wasn't that it was true or false, I thought it was just stupid. They didn't tell us what was going to be on. All the

> stuff on there was *nothing* we took in class. (Holly)

So the questions students asked prior to the quizzes in attempts to identify what to study were, ultimately, considered to be a waste of time.

The major paper in EdAdmin was also singled out as ambiguous. The topic - The [Province] School Teacher in the '90s - was a difficult one to structure. Consequently, many of the students handed in papers not knowing whether or not they had done an acceptable job.

There was much less criticism of the Early Childhood assignments, but the concern for marks was still evident in the competitiveness between students making class presentations. The practice of displaying one's work contributed to the one-upmanship that I noted in class:

> No one wants to be first, they don't know what's expected. Now I wish that we had gone sooner, because the more we see the more we feel we have to do. (Janet)

If there was criticism of the Early Childhood assignments, it was usually the result of a perceived unfairness. The use of classroom space for assignment # 1 was an example of this. Some of the students exceeded the stipulated space limitations and were not penalized while another group *was* penalized because of the clutter they created in their attempts to stay within the prescribed limitations.

The students' concern for doing well was also reflected in their desire to know, at all times, where they stood. They particularly criticized the fact that they would not receive numerical assessments until halfway through the term:

> One thing about that class a few people were upset with .... we didn't get the topic for

> our paper - and it's due in three weeks - and just because they hadn't organized themselves ahead of time, we're going to suffer. (Janet)

This, they feared, would not give them time to rectify the situation if these marks were lower than expected.

This desire for regular feedback was also noted in a study by Osborne and Taylor (1983). In an investigation involving third-year generalist students at the University of Alberta, they found that sixty-eight percent of a group of one hundred and eighty students were upset (they described it as "experienced as stressful") by a revised undergraduate program design which resulted in delayed performance assessments (Osborne and Taylor, 1983:219).

Learning to use their time efficiently was made more difficult for some students by the open instructional arrangement of the Early Childhood classroom:

> We've never been given free choices before; in fact, it has usually been the exact opposite: "You will have to have this and this and this in this order." (Leger)
>
> There's a lot of work that has to be done but no one knows exactly what has to be done when. (Janet)
>
> It's disorganized ... I know others feel the same way too; everyone talks about it - it's just that ... we know it's a learning centre approach, but I feel the need for more structure. (Holly)

Although this was the second such course they had taken, many were still having trouble adjusting to the freedom of self-direction inherent in a loosely structured setting. Consequently, they often fell back on familiar methods of filtering out the courses' necessary content. Questioning the instructor to gain a sense of what was important to her was one of these methods; concentrating on learning centres which had been designated as compulsory was another. While most of the students felt that all of the centres were useful, the pressure of time and the desire to do well prevented them from doing any more work than necessary at the non-compulsory centres.

Thus, two definitions of the classroom situation were evident during the six-week courses:

1. A teacher education program was expected to provide practical information on how to be a teacher. Course content was judged, in large part, on this basis.

2. A desire to do well in the courses caused students to attempt to clearly define what was expected of them and to focus on those activities which were most likely to influence their evaluation.

Being A Student Teacher

In chapter 5 data were presented on the experiences of the key and secondary informants while they were on the eight-week practicum. Four major themes and four minor themes constituted the bulk of this chapter. These centered on the cooperating teacher, the faculty consultant, the process of evaluation, classroom control, making subtle modifications to the cooperating teacher's method of operating, seeing student teaching as performance and the theory/practice issue in teacher education. Once again, the following discussion assumes that the reader has read Chapter 5.

A General Definition of the Situation

All of the Early Childhood students with whom I spoke defined *this* practicum as the single most important component of their four-year B.Ed. program. Practica in general were considered to be the most relevant aspects of the program as they provided "hands on" experience for the students. This particular practicum, however, was in the preferred area for the Early Childhood students and was thus defined as most critical in terms of future employment.

The practicum has historically held the most prominent position in undergraduate teacher education. Lanier (1984:84) notes that while the university-based study of pedagogy is frequently considered by teachers to have limited value, practice teaching is viewed as essential. Its importance is implicitly recognized by the sheer quantity of research which has focused on this aspect of professional preparation. Its significance also reinforces the "learning by doing" view of teacher education held by many of the informants in this study.

Aside from the numerous ways in which the importance of the practicum was reinforced - discussion amongst peers, comments by the instructor, heresay from others who had gone before, experienced teachers - I suspect that there is a further influencing factor which involves the notion of a status change, for there is a difference between being a student and being a student teacher. To use interactionist terminology, it necessitates a re-negotiated self. For years these students have defined themselves *as* students, and being a "student" means having a certain status. This incorporates certain elements which constitute the "role" associated with the status, such as "going to classes," "studying," and "writing tests" (Lauer and Handel, 1983:121). In many ways, going to university is simply an extension of going to high school. One is still going to classes, studying, and writing tests. All of these activities are understood to be part of "self as student."

The practicum is a different experience. From a status perspective, it is an ambiguous one. Student teachers are neither students in a traditional sense, nor teachers. Their role incorporates elements of both. They are, or at least they behave like, teachers to the children while at the same time feeling like students to their cooperating teachers. As Margo said: "Until I'm not a student, I feel like a student."

The very fact that the Early Childhood students were about to *change* their status (thereby negotiating a new self) made the practicum a significant event. Each of them would be leaving the certainty of their usual social environment and moving into a new situation where they would have to interact with different people and take on a new, ill-defined role. All (with the exception of those on regional placement) had been exposed to their placements in preparing their prop box assignments for Early Childhood. They had met their cooperating teachers and the children they would be with for eight weeks and had observed the existing situation in their classrooms. They had also begun to formulate perspectives on what they could and couldn't do as student teachers.

The significance of the practicum was further emphasized by the "realization" that it was a "make or break" event. All the students embarked on this eight week experience knowing that their performance would likely determine whether or not they would become full time teachers. This constituted the general definition of the situation; a primary goal of student teaching was to obtain a good final evaluation and, consequently, the student teachers were faced with the need to intentionally define the situations for significant others (cooperating teachers and faculty consultants) in an attempt to assist them in developing favorable impressions.

Cooperating Teachers and Conformity

Equipped only with minimal teaching experience and the knowledge that they had to receive excellent evaluations in order to be attractive to potential employers, the Early Childhood students entered the practicum fully aware that the relationships they established with their cooperating teachers would be a major factor in their overall success. This situation has the effect of forcing each student teacher to behave in the way which would be most likely to receive the approval of his or her cooperating teacher.

One can hardly deny the potential influence of cooperating teachers on student teachers. The cooperating teacher, defined by the student teachers as the most significant of the significant others involved in the practicum is in a position to substantially influence the nature of the experience. Others writing on student teaching also support this observation (e.g., Karmos and Jacko, 1977; Haberman, 1982; Lasley and Applegate, 1985).

Given their positions of authority, cooperating teachers play a significant role in defining the nature of the relationship with their student teacher. This means that student teachers' attempts at intentional definition were controlled to a large extent by the way the cooperating teachers' chose to define the relationship. A number of supervisory relationships are possible, depending on how teachers interpret their role, their evolving perspectives on their student teachers, their own personalities, and what they feel is best for the children. Horwood (1981) interviewed a number of cooperating teachers (he refers to them as "associate" teachers) and observed them in conference with student teachers. Based on these data, he describes three models which reflect common approaches to the cooperating teacher-student teacher relationship. By far the most common was the master-apprentice model, a relationship where the cooperating teacher gradually introduces the novice to the world of teaching, and provides regular observation and criticism. The operative assumption in this relationship is that the cooperating teacher *is* a master of teaching, and thus the function of the student teacher is to watch and replicate. As Housego and Boldt (1985:114) point out however, the criticism offered by the cooperating teacher is not based so much on a comprehensive knowledge of research in teaching as it is on the belief that "...one's own success is proof that one's approach is correct."

The second type of relationship Horwood describes is represented by his idiosyncratic model. Cooperating teachers subscribing to this view consider that certain teaching techniques may be appropriate for some but not for others. Thus, in their view, individual personality bears strongly on the appropriateness of a particular approach. Consequently, these cooperating teachers tend to observe student teachers less frequently and offer little feedback and little direction.

Horwood's last relationship is represented by the brewmaster model. Here cooperating teachers function on the basis of "rules of thumb" which seem to work. While this bears some similarity to the master-apprentice model, the underlying rationale for these rules may be unstated or unknown to the teacher. As Horwood (1981:81) states, the typifying axiom of this relationship is "I don't know what

I'm doing, but it must be something right."

Horwood's classifications bear some congruence with the findings of this study. In Chapter 5 I used the designation "master-apprentice" to represent the relationships between cooperating teacher and student teacher in Margo's case and in Melinda's case. I had not read Horwood's article at that point, but had selected this designation simply because it seemed to capture the essence of a novice learning the trade of the experienced practitioner which is what I felt these particular cooperating teachers were trying to accomplish with their student teachers. Furthermore, the way in which the student teacher was slowly "weaned" into a full-time teaching load, coupled with the close observation and criticism of the cooperating teacher, reminded me of the inherent component of any apprenticeship.

In many ways Leger's situation with his cooperating teacher bears a similarity to the idiosyncratic model. He received little in the way of regular, constructive feedback, and was largely left on his own. Unfortunately, I do not know whether his cooperating teacher espoused this particular approach to student teacher supervision or not.

Becky's situation does not seem to fit any of these models. However, in a brief section at the end of Horwood's article he makes the following statement: "Some associate teachers use a carefully organized system of reciprocal observation and feedback in which the student teacher functions much more as a partner than a junior" (Horwood, 1981:82). He doesn't expand on this, but it hints at the type of relationship Becky had with her cooperating teacher. I referred to it earlier as a team approach, and I believe this captures the essential features of the relationship. Becky was treated as another teacher in the classroom from the very first of the practicum, and while she assumed more and more responsibility as the weeks passed (with her cooperating teacher being less and less involved), there was never the clear distinction in roles that typified the master-apprentice relationships of Melinda and Margo. They worked together.

While some of the informants didn't particularly like the ways their cooperating teacher had defined the relationship, the status associated with "self as student teacher" and their desire to do well on the final evaluation placed them in the role of follower rather than the role of leader.

The most obvious example of this was the strong tendency of the informants to conform to the elements inherent in their particular situations. This tendency to conform has also been noted by others investigating student teaching (Seperson and Joyce, 1973; Clifton, 1979; Copeland, 1979; Zimpher et al., 1980; Dickie, 1983; Applegate and Lasley, 1984; Beyer, 1984; Tardif 1984; Goodman, 1985).

In a study of ten student teachers at a large American university, Goodman (1985:45) found that the majority of them "passively" accepted the traditional curriculum and standard forms of instruction. She did identify one particular individual whom she described as "intellectually alive and socially aware" who sought out a cooperating teacher who would let her experiment during practice teaching (Goodman, 1985:45). But even here the student felt compelled to adhere to certain aspects of the prescribed curriculum.

Beyer (1984) also comments upon this conformity tendency, linking it to a desire on behalf of the students to succeed as professionals. He worries that this desire, coupled with a cooperating teacher who reinforces compliance with the status quo, may lead to "uncritical uniformity" (Beyer, 1984:36-37).

In a study of four second language student teachers, Tardif (1984) noted their tendency to conform to standard practice in their classrooms and referred to it as "taking the path of least resistance." It is clear, however, that they frequently disapproved of some of what they did and did it only because to do otherwise might jeopardize success during the practicum. She quotes one of her informants (Tardif, 1984:152):

> All the cooperating teachers I had were very different and I think I did well with all of them. The reason I did well was because I made a point to adapt myself to them and their situation. I think you have to do that as a student teacher. If you're not prepared to do that then be prepared to have a tough time.

This was essentially what Leger was saying when he spoke of "molding yourself" to the cooperating teacher's way of doing things. Most of the other informants felt the same. But based on the findings of this study, students didn't take the "path of least resistance" because it was the easiest way to go. It would be more accurate to say that most of the key and secondary informants conformed primarily in accordance with the way they had defined the practicum. They had decided, even before they began practice teaching, that certain behaviours, i.e., abiding by the established rules, avoiding confrontation and presenting a self which significant others would see as competent and worthy, might well result in a superior evaluation which would, of course, enhance their prospects for eventual employment. In additon, each defined their status in a way that placed them in a subservient position to their cooperating teachers. These classrooms were not theirs, and significant deviation was simply not a consideration:

> ... you have to realize I'm just a student teacher. I'm not running the classroom. You don't go into the class and start dictating what you like and what you don't like. (Margo)

> There's rules that have been established in there that I don't feel I have any right to change. (Melinda)

> You can't be your own teacher; you've got to do what the teacher says... (Leger)

> If they don't like you they're not going to give you a good evaluation no matter how good you are. (Leger)

When I reflect upon what I understand of Cathy's situation, it occurs to me that nonconformity will not necessarily result in a poor evaluation. Cathy continually attempted to bring her own views to bear on her cooperating teacher's instructional techniques. And while this caused her occasional stress and uncertainty, she received excellent marks from both her evaluators. However, this misses the point, particularly if we return to the assertion of "defining situations as real" by Thomas and Thomas (1928). For if student teachers enter a situation believing, for whatever reason, that doing well means conforming, and if through ongoing re-definition based on regular interaction they find no reason to believe otherwise, then whether or not they could have deviated is an academic question.

A final persuasive argument in favor of conformity lay in the student teachers' concern for the children they were teaching. Failure to follow the classroom procedure with which the children were familiar could easily confuse and discomfort the children. Of course, parallel to this consideration ran the knowledge that to introduce confusion into the classroom was also to encourage behavioural abberations among the children which could, in turn, destroy the impression of credibility each student was trying to build.

Thus, conformity resulted from a complex interplay between defining the practicum as a "must" situation, defining their own status as subservient to the cooperating teacher (and faculty consultant), and a desire to avoid general classroom confusion.

The Faculty Consultant

The desire to do well, and the subsequent tendency to conform, may also be applied to the relationship student teachers have with their faculty consultants. However, attempts by some of the student teachers to intentionally define the situation for their consultants went awry as a result of fundamental conflict over appropriate classroom organization between consultants and cooperating teachers. Satisfying conflicting expectations posed significant difficulties for some of the informants:

> ... it seems with her I have to have, for every different kid, a different lesson plan. So it seems [that's what] she's trying to put across, so I don't know. It isn't feasible. (Melinda)

This raises questions about the actual function of faculty consultants. In studies conducted at the University of Alberta on the role of the faculty consultant, researchers noted a lack of consensus among interest groups on the role of faculty consultants. Hall (1980:30) designed a fifty-two item survey questionnaire to isolate what he termed "expectation items," i.e., those things which faculty consultants should do in their supervisory capacity and gave it to three groups of respondents: student teachers, cooperating teachers and faculty consultants. The results were ambiguous. In Hall's words: "Neither perfect consensus nor complete lack of consensus was found within any of the groups on any of the items" (Hall, 1980:109). For the student teachers, however, most agreed that the consultant should "hold a post-observation conference with the student teacher" (Hall, 1980:105). A similar emphasis was found by Ratsoy et al. (1978:26) in a study of the organizational effectiveness of the education practica at the University of Alberta in the late 1970s. Unfortunately, nothing was said in either study about what they should discuss during this conference.

Questions are also raised in the literature on teacher education about the necessity of university supervision of student teachers. Both extremes are represented. Some would abolish university supervision altogether while others see it as a valuable means of guarding against passive, undiscerning socialization.

For example, Bowman (1979) adopts a critical position which is ultimately based on the most efficient deployment of university resources. He argues that given the sparse time the supervisor spends with the student, and the potential for a "friendly conspiracy" between cooperating teacher and student teacher to mask the true goings on of the classroom, the practice should be discontinued (Bowman, 1979:30). This notion of a "friendly conspiracy" reminds me of the situations with Becky, Melinda (at least initially), Janet and Gwen. In order to satisfy the expectations of the faculty consultant they each, on at least one occasion, "conspired" with their cooperating teacher to put on a special "show" during the consultant's visit. Emans (1983:15) notes that it is not uncommon in groups of three for two members to form a coalition and isolate the third.

Since the consultant visits the school infrequently, it seems logical that he or she would be the isolated individual. However, deviations from this cropped up in this study. At one point Melinda suspected that she was the isolated third member and Margo's close relationship with her consultant precluded anyone being isolated. So to recommend discontinuing university supervision on the assumption that the supervisor will not see a "true" picture, is to miss what possible benefits the system offers.

Zimpher et al. (1980) approach university supervision with these benefits in mind. In a case study of three student teachers, three cooperating teachers, and one university supervisor, they found that the supervisor had a motivating influence on the student teachers. They concluded that in his absence the student teachers would have quickly attempted to replicate the cooperating teacher's techniques without critical analysis or reflection (Zimpher et al., 1980:13). They also noted that the consultant fills a key role in facilitating relationships between student teachers, cooperating teachers, school administrators and university personnel.

What seems apparent from this is a need for faculty consultants to appreciate the situation which confronts student teachers. They should understand that student teachers, out of a desire to do well, may well attempt to produce a special show for their benefit. Furthermore, if there has been little communication between faculty consultant, cooperating teacher and student teacher and no realistic expectations for the student teachers have been set, then consultants should be aware that the student teachers will be inclined to adhere to established practice. Under these circumstances it is hardly reasonable for the faculty consultant to expect the student teachers to do that which deviates significantly from the cooperating teacher's instructional and organizational procedures. According to the findings of this study, when consultants held expectations running counter to classroom practice, they caused a great deal of stress for the student teachers. Becky's, Janet's and Melinda's situations were typical examples of this. On the other hand, the consultant's presence was welcomed when their expectations took into account contextual elements such as existing practices and the goals held by the student teacher. Margo's situation was the exemplar of this type of relationship.

In the previous chapter I pinpointed many of the difficulties which can be caused, inadvertently or otherwise, by the faculty consultant. Those key informants (Becky and Melinda) who experienced problem relationships with their faculty consultants were able to isolate certain contributing factors. For Becky, the initial conflict arose over classroom organization; her consultant, in Becky's opinion, expected a traditional approach to instruction even though the classroom was relatively unstructured. Although this changed, Becky later became upset because her consultant had begun making comments about things she had not witnessed or which had never taken place. Although the comments were complimentary, their obscure origins, as far as Becky was concerned, undermined the consultant's credibility. This problem was made even more irritating by the inescapable fact that the consultant's evaluation was as important as that of the cooperating teacher.

Initially, Melinda was upset by the way the consultant only visited infrequently yet still felt qualified to make sweeping generalizations about Melinda's classroom techniques. This complaint persisted, but was eventually overshadowed by the consultant's continued insistence that Melinda take account of individual differences. Melinda was in a classroom which was structured for sameness, i.e., everyone doing much the same thing at the same time. She was already spending countless hours preparing lessons to meet her cooperating teacher's expectations. "Insisting" that she restructure the classroom to satisfy the consultant was unrealistic, particularly in this situation where time was short and the cooperating teacher resistant. It would have been far easier on Melinda had her consultant merely sensitized her to the disadvantages of traditionally structured classrooms without giving the impression that she expected change.

Complaints also came from the secondary informants but it was the infrequency of visits by faculty consultants which caused the most annoyance, an annoyance which was not alleviated by the eventual disclosure that some faculty consultant's were claiming to have visited more regularly than they had. Here again the question of credibility surfaces and from it come more questions about the actual function of the faculty consultant.

It is obvious that one identifiable problem is poor communication among the members of the three groups. Essentially this is a problem of program design and I will discuss it later in this chapter under the heading of "Implications for the Design of Teacher Education Programs." The important point at the moment is, that in spite of the vagueness of the consultant's role, these individuals, according to the ways they themselves have defined the role, are able to cause either positive or negative consequences for their student teachers.

The Significance of Classroom Control

A number of writers have noted the significance which classroom control has for student teachers (Callahan, 1980; Baldursson, 1983; Lapin, 1984; Housego and Boldt, 1985; Tardif, 1985). In a questionnaire study of one hundred and twenty students at Washington State University, Callahan (1980:) found that classroom control was a significant concern for student teachers:

> It would appear that the student teaching experience is significantly influential in demonstrating to all teacher candidates that knowledge and firm control are necessary attributes of the effective teacher.

Conducting a phenomenological investigation of student teachers in Iceland, Baldursson (1983:107) isolates an element of control which is most apt to this study:

> The significance of noise was not particularly that it interrupted normal classroom activity but primarily that it was a "sign," for other teachers, of their incompetence.

For many of the informants in this study, firm control did not necessarily indicate competence, but lack of control certainly hinted at incompetence:

> I prefer when they're (observers) not there. You know, in the sense that I feel I'm more in control, I don't have this eagle eye looking over me. I think that's because you know it doesn't always go the way you want ... I guess you don't like to admit being a failure and being incompetent. (Margo)

As indicated in Chapter 5, misbehaviour among the children placed the student teachers in a win-lose situation. In terms of definition of the situation, having to deal with poor behaviour in the classroom caused a dilemma for those who were intentionally attempting to present a positive, competent self to significant others.

For many of the students failure to win cooperation from the children meant failure to establish their own credibility as effective teachers.

This was particularly a problem for Melinda. In spite of the effort she put into a "friendly" approach and lesson preparation the children were frequently inattentive. As the weeks passed she started to question her approach to classroom control:

> I suppose maybe I should have been harder with them and not approach them on such a friendly level, but more on a superior level to them and said: "Hey, listen, this is the way it's going to be." (Melinda)

To her, the teacher should be superior to the students, i.e., the teacher should do the telling and the students should do the listening. I remember how upset she was on one occasion when a child told *her* how to do something. Her response was to tell this child that *she* (Melinda) would give the instructions. Her distress in these situations was amplified by the presence of her cooperating teacher. Student teaching--was a performance, an attempt to intentionally define the situation for significant others, and when the students failed to comply Melinda became very frustrated and exasperated. Her inclination was to raise her voice but she feared that her cooperating teacher would see this as a sign that she had lost control. In the end, little seemed to work and she found herself glad that the practicum was over.

Thus, the way Melinda chose to deal with the children was influenced by her circumstances. She controlled her natural tendencies because she was being evaluated, and a good evaluation was very important to her.

Margo's circumstances were different, but she still considered problems of classroom control to reflect negatively on her competence as a teacher, especially if she was being observed at the time, and she usually was.

Leger was the only one of the key informants who didn't understand discipline problems in this way. He had a great deal of confidence in his ability as a teacher. He believed that many discipline problems do not originate with the child. Not surprisingly, he pin-pointed classroom structure as lending itself to problems of discipline. Thus, his natural inclination when these situations arose--especially if a number of kids were involved - was to stop what he was doing and restructure (or, more accurately, unstructure) the activities. However, because evaluation was important to him and because it wasn't his classroom, he used techniques which he felt were more in line with established practice in his situation. As with Melinda, his attempts to intentionally define the situation for his cooperating teacher caused him to utilize techniques which would not reflect badly on him in the eyes of his cooperating teacher.

Student Teaching as Performance

All of the informants in this study found themselves conforming to the routines and structures inherent in their individual placements. All were careful to nurture good relationships with their cooperating teachers, at least to the extent to which this was within their control. Most saw problems of classroom control as a negative reflection on their abilities, and thus as something which hindered their attempts at intentional definition, or, in dramaturgical terminology, impression management. This had consequences in terms of how the students felt about what they were doing.

I have previously referred to student teaching as a "performance," and linked it with the evaluation experience. In other words, the way the relationship was defined between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher (master-apprentice, etc.) dictated to a great extent how the former went about evaluating the latter. Those in a master-apprentice relationship (Margo and Melinda) had a greater awareness of being under constant scrutiny and consequently had a greater sense of performance. But even in relationships such as Becky had with her teacher, the very fact that she chose to abide by established routines while claiming to be opposed to some of them suggests that she was performing. I have already made the case that one of the main reasons student teachers conformed was a result of their desire to obtain a good evaluation.

Goffman (1959:107) refers to the area where performances are given as " front regions." At the same time, a back region or "backstage" may also be defined. He describes this as "a place, relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course" (Goffman, 1959:112). For the informants in this study, the front regions, of course, were the classrooms and any areas where interaction took place with significant others (cooperating teachers, faculty consultants, children). The backstage was any place that didn't include the aforementioned. Logs fell into this category, particularly those which were not to be read by an evaluator. If they were, then the performance had to be maintained within their pages. Because Leger's logs were not to be read by his cooperating teacher he tended to be more open about how he felt about his placement. Becky, on the other hand, was careful in making entries in her logs. She had no concerns about her cooperating teacher reading them, but they were available to her consultant. Consequently, when I asked early in the practicum if I could review them she willingly complied, but added that she'd have to go through them with me to point out what was "shit" and what wasn't.

As a researcher, confidant, and someone truly interested in the teacher education experience, I believe I was privy to the backstage region. Here the student teachers ceased performing for their cooperating teachers and others and commented on the nature of their performances. As a result of being allowed access to this region, I began to see the extent to which the experience *was* a performance and how it affected each individual. A number of things were said "backstage" which reinforce the drama metaphor in student teaching, a few of which are recounted below:

> It's more bending to mold yourself into the mold that the teacher has. And you have to take your philosophy and your ideas and mold them into what she's got. (Leger)
>
> And you just kind of learn to bite your tongue or play along. It's not worth the time and effort to make a big deal out of things that I don't feel comfortable with. (Margo)
>
> [Sometimes] I feel frustrated and restricted and ... well, not overwhelmed ... just getting tired of people telling me what to do. Like just having people above you all the time you know, it's not like it's your own classroom. (Melinda)
>
> I just do what she tells me to do and everything's O.K. (Holly)
>
> I'll do what she says. She's the person who gives me my mark. (Cathy)
>
> Oh my God! She can't see my logs. If she sees my logs I'm sunk. (Leger)

> O.K. lady, fine. If that's what you want, that's what you get. (Becky, on her faculty consultant's expectations)

> ... having people observe, or knowing you're being evaluated holds me back, and I know it does. Because I know if I did it I would do things the way *I* felt right and there would be no one questioning me. (Margo)

As I mentioned previously, the effects of performance were most noticeable with those student teachers who had a master-apprentice relationship with their cooperating teachers, especially if there were behaviour problems evident in the room. The constant scrutiny created a tension that lasted throughout the practicum, and by the end of the eight weeks both Margo and Melinda were very happy to conclude the experience. This is not to say that neither enjoyed student teaching; it was the need to constantly perform that grew to be a very trying experience. And even though Leger had a different relationship with his cooperating teacher, his commitment to unstructured kindergarten settings caused him to view himself as a "robot"; as someone who was just going through the routines in order to get a good evaluation. He was convinced that much of what he was doing was fundamentally wrong.

Summary

Some of the categories I created in chapters 4 and 5 have not formed a major part of this discussion. I refer specifically to "The Structure of Learning Environments," and "The Theory/Practice Issue." These are both incorporated into the sections which follow.

What I have attempted to do in the preceeding discourse is relate the ways students behaved during university coursework and while student teaching to compare this with the ways in which they had defined the experiences to begin with, and, in the case of cooperating teachers and faculty consultants, how the situation was defined for them. Most expected that teacher education courses would (or should) provide them with the practical knowledge necessary to be effective classroom teachers. When course content was not seen to be directly related to the everyday world of classroom teaching - as they perceived it - it was frequently labelled as "theoretical," and subsequently discounted. At the same time, whether or not concepts and ideas were "practical" or "theoretical," they still had to be studied in order to receive an acceptable grade. This dimension of practicality saw students employing a variety of means to identify those aspects of coursework which were necessary in order to successfully (i.e., with a good mark) complete the course. In chapter 4 I labelled this "working the system." Thus, teacher education was defined as a search for practical knowledge, and at the same time as an endeavour in which it was important to obtain good grades in order to be successful in pursing teaching as a career.

The practicum was identified as the most important component of the four-year program. This was the "real" world of teaching. This was the opportunity to engage in the practice of teaching. It was also defined as the most crucial stage in becoming a teacher. Given its importance in career terms and the fact that it meant moving from a certain to an uncertain social situation, students entered this period realizing that building good relationships with significant others would largely dictate the success of the experience. They consequently tended to comply with the stated or perceived expectations of the cooperating teacher and the faculty consultant regardless of personally held beliefs. The most significant example of this related to appropriate structural arrangements in kindergarten classrooms. Most of the students, coming straight from an Early Childhood course which addressed this topic, were critical of existing arrangements in their classrooms. Yet none attempted to alter the status quo other than in very subtle ways. To do so might jeopardize their success (i.e., their final evaluation) on the practicum.

I have suggested that student teaching is a performance, i.e., an attempt to intentionally define the situation for significant others. The *sense* of performance is heightened by the evaluation process. This was especially evident where students were under regular scrutiny and given daily feedback on how well they did, i.e., how well they performed. In referring to student teaching as a performance, I don't want create the impression that students were trying to deceive their evaluators, although I suspect this did occur, especially with faculty consultants. Instead, I am suggesting that the very fact that all of the students had defined the practicum as a "make or break" experience, and that many of them professed not to believe in much of what they were doing (i.e., they "wouldn't" do it in their on classroom), points to the necessity to perform, to intentionally define the situation for significant others so as to create a favorable impression.

A Few Comments on Socialization and Professional Preparation

At the beginning of this chapter I referred to definition of the situation as a concept embedded in socialization. This means that the ways individuals interpret their situations affects the ways they are socialized into a group or profession. In other words, individuals interact with the definitions others are trying to create for them and make judgments about appropriate and inappropriate actions based on, among other things, past experiences.

Most of what I have said previously in this chapter, plus data from chapters 4 and 5 which I have largely ignored to this point, are incorporated below in an examination, albeit brief, of teacher education as a process of socialization.

The Concept of Socialization

Like most topics in social science, socialization has been the focus of much debate. One reason for this is the existence of various ways of conceiving of the social world. Descriptions and explanations of social life carry with them implicit assumptions about the nature of reality (ontological assumptions) and ways in which one can acquire knowledge about reality (epistemological assumptions). At the most general level, this debate revolves about the existence or non-existence of a social world which is external to the individual. The question is one of whether there is a social world composed of "hard, tangible and relatively immutable structures" or not (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:4).

This debate carries over into discussions of socialization. The source of conflict is not so much *what* socialization is but more *how it takes place*, especially if the debate focuses on socialization beyond childhood. Although using different terminology, most writers agree that socialization is a process of enculturation whereby individuals acquire the shared meanings necessary to the existence of any society or subgroup within a society. The critical question here is: what role does the individual play in his or her socialization, if any? As Wentworth (1980:2) points out, this is the "determinism-versus-freedom issue for socialization theory," both of which represent endpoints of a continuum. The determinism extreme postulates that the social world, like the natural world, is governed by causal laws. Here socialization takes place regardless of the will or judgment of the individual. The freedom extreme accepts the freedom of the individual to act as he or she sees fit as an obvious quality of individualism (Wentworth, 1980:2-3). Giving total control over to the individual, however, denies the existence and possible constraining influences of social structures.

The position which I have adopted lies in the middle of this continuum. The very fact that I have employed symbolic interactionism as a conceptual framework points to a strong emphasis on the role of the individual, particularly the adult individual, in constructing his or her reality. This position is well articulated by Lauer and Handel (1983:101):

> ... after childhood every individual enters each new interaction situation with a background of socialization experiences; because of the complexity of the attitudes that he or she has acquired from those experiences, the individual will not be wholly shaped by the new interaction situation but will, on the contrary, have alternative courses to choose from and will have some degree of influence over the situation.

As explained earlier, interactionists posit that individual behaviour is preceeded by an interpretive process whereby meaning is attached to the objects and events in a particular setting. At the same time, the definition and re-definition of the situation employed in human interaction points to the "realness" which individuals may give to their circumstances and which influences their subsequent actions. Whether or not social structures exist in a tangible sense is not an issue here. The fact that individuals may define them as real is. Thus, socialization involves an interplay between the individual and the social structures inherent, or defined as real, in relevant situations. For this reason, I favor the definition of socialization offered by Wentworth (1980:85):

> Socialization is the activity that confronts and lends structure to the entry of nonmembers into an already existing world or a sector of that world.

The benefit of this definition, as with that of Lauer and Handel above, is that socialization is taken as interaction, thus recognizing the existence of constraining social structures while allowing for the influence of the individual in the shaping of this experience (Wentworth, 1980:86). As I will demonstrate later, this view of socialization is well supported by the data from this study. My focus, however, is not so much on the actual acquiring of culture as it is on the "fact" that it occurs selectively, not passively.

Professional Schools

The process of socialization into the professions has received much attention by social scientists. Ondrack (1975:97) notes that studies conducted in medicine, dentistry, law, management and nursing have yielded fairly consistent findings: that students at the preservice level adopt the idealistic attitudes and values of their faculty but that a pragmatic shift occurs once they move into field settings and acquire different role models. At a more specific level, Merton et al. (1957:287) point out that since socialization is a product of social interaction, key individuals (significant others) play a more obvious role in this process than others. Their point is important, for the person whom one student defines as significant may not be defined thus by another student. This makes generalizing difficult and misleading.

Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) have reviewed some of the teacher education literature which deals with the socialization of neophytes. They describe a commonly-held view, one which conforms to the findings noted by Ondrack (1975), and two alternative "scenarios" on the effects of preservice preparation. In the most popular scenario, higher education is considered to have a liberalizing effect on prospective teachers. That is, students, while at university, become less conservative in their world view and adopt a more progressive outlook. However, studies reveal that these attitudes regress to more orthodox positions during student teaching or in the initial year of inservice teaching (Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1981:7).

The first alternative scenario suggests that professional preparation has little impact on students; that socialization has effectively occurred prior to university entrance. This position has been argued by Lortie (1975) and supported by others. The "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975:61) which preceeds formal preparation, however, does not account for the traditional-progressive-traditional shifts noted above. But based on a three-year study of education students, Shipman (cited in Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1981:8) proposed that the liberal attitudes shown during preservice preparation were little more than an outer layer "superimposed on a substratum of traditional perspectives." In other words, the students were creating an intentional definition of the situation so that faculty members would think they had acquired appropriate attitudes. This is a manifestation of "working the system."

The second alternative scenario proposes that the effect of the university is actually a conservative one. Universities and schools are viewed as being in league to produce conformist attitudes among preservice and inservice teachers. Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981:10) suggest that all three of these views are credible.

As part of a comprehensive study of teacher socialization in Great Britain, Lacey (1977) spent a two-year period interviewing and associating with prospective teachers. His work tends to support the first alternative scenario proposed by Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981), that universities have little long-term impact on teachers. While I don't wish to review his research in detail here, there are certain concepts that he proposes which can be incorporated into this discussion.

He (Lacey, 1977:67) argues that there is a need for a concept which expresses autonomous behaviour in situations where coercive structures are evident. He proposes "social strategy," and I find his explanation compelling (Lacey, 1977:67):

> The term 'strategy' is appropriate because it implies a purposive, guiding, autonomous element, within individual and group behaviour. It is clear that the uniformities in human behaviour, which give rise to recognizable patterns in research, indicate that individual social strategies for the most part comply with or are modified by constraining social forces. The implication here is that the constraints of the situation and the *individual's purpose* within that situation must be taken into account. (emphasis in original)

Lacey's position supports the interactionist position that the goals individuals have for a particular period of interaction and the way they have defined the elements inherent in the situations must be considered when one is attempting to explain the behaviour of those individuals. In the case of student teaching, adopting a cooperating teacher's instructional strategy may mean that a student teacher agrees with the cooperating teacher's approach. Alternatively, if the student has successful completion of the practicum as one of his or her goals (the individual's purpose), and if the instructional expectations of the cooperating teacher clash with those of the student teacher (a constraint of the situation), adopting the teacher's instructional style may merely be a strategy to obtain a satisfactory assessment. While this may be an overly simplistic explanation of a given situation, it would be equally misleading to assume that the adoption of a cooperating teacher's instructional procedure by a student teacher represents passive uncritical compliance.

Lacey (1977:72) proposes two more concepts which represent varieties of social strategies: "internalized adjustment" and "strategic compliance." Internalized adjustment occurs when an individual has accepted the arguments and values put forth by significant individuals. In the case of strategic compliance, an individual may merely "get by" while remaining partially or wholly unconvinced by the arguments and values espoused in a given situation. Using these terms, we can apply them to the scenarios outlined in the preceeding paragraph. In a practicum setting, a student teacher may totally accept the instructional and organizational strategies employed by a cooperating teacher, i.e., internalized adjustment. Or, he or she may merely *appear* to accept them, for whatever reason, while remaining unconvinced, i.e., strategic compliance. I believe, as I will show later, that both of these situations are represented in this study.

Many other writers and researchers in teacher education speak of preservice preparation - especially the practicum - as a socialization experience. Some have argued in favor of socializing towards established skills and values (Clifton and Long, 1984:12). Others, as noted by Dickie (1983:220), view socialization as an undesirable occurrence. Some researchers seem to imply that socialization is a passive process in which the individual has little control over what is happening to him or her. Zeichner (1980:52), however, noting the existence of "resistors," suggests that socialization contains contradiction as well as reproduction. And Lapin (1984:71-72), in a study of preservice teacher socialization, noted that individuals exerted significant control over their own socialization. The very fact that there are diverse views on the effects of professional preparation, and that each, as far as we know, is credible, emphasizes the complexity of the socialization experience and the difficulty in generalizing from one situation to another (or, for that matter, from one person to another). This theme, if diversity can be called a theme, characterizes the findings in this study.

The Early Childhood Students

Socialization in a University Context. Focusing first on the university term, I suggest that the courses which the students took can be viewed as an attempt by instructors at intentional socialization. Whether the espoused values are eventually internalized by the students or not, of course, is another question. All university courses may not necessarily be best understood in this way, but professional preparation courses can be. However, this does not mean that all of these courses attempt to socialize in the same way.

In the case of the Early Childhood course in which I took part, the attempt to socialize was definitely in a progressive direction. In other words, the instructors were not interested in providing the students with instructional skills which would conform to those practiced in many classrooms. Instead, they intentionally offered an approach to curriculum and pedagogy which they hoped would become the way of the future, and which clashed with more traditional views:

> We could do this. However, such programs are what you have experienced most of your life. I would rather put my energy into changing what is. (Dr. Mullen, in response to an entry in Leger's log where he suggests that students should be provided with exercises which reflect current practice, so as to minimize the shock of entering the "real world.")

The Educational Administration course, however, offered students a different perspective. The emphasis was dominantly on *what is*, and less on *what should be*. Much of the time was spent discussing the role of the teacher as a professional (i.e., what one should or shouldn't do in a host of situations), or examining the structure of educational systems. Furthermore, the focus was invariably a teacher-centred one, and this stood in direct contrast to the child-centred approach advocated in the Early Childhood classes. In so saying, I do not wish to be critical of the EdAdmin position, for if organizations are to function as cohesive entities, the rights, obligations and perspectives of all members (children, teachers, administrators, support staff) must be considered. What I do wish to point out, however, is that their respective orientations - one child-centered and progressive, the other teacher-centered and traditional - do not support each other.

In Early Childhood, the most obvious difficulty for some students was not in accepting the principle of a child-centered pedagogy, but in accepting the structural implications which followed from that position. It meant accepting that children - five year old children - can be given more control than is traditionally the case over what they do during classtime. For some of the students, structure in the classroom meant being in control, and a lack of structure represented not being in control:

> I know I'd like to have more structure so that I know what the kids are doing ... I don't want them to sit in straight rows with me with a whip in that kind of structure. It's so that I know what they're doing. It seems out of control in the learning centre ... for me. (Holly)

> I really can see the benefits [to open classrooms] and am sincerely trying to adopt this type of philosophy as I feel it really works. I guess I'm worried about individualizing instruction in an open environment. What if I miss the problems a slow learner may be having or I don't see the needs of the gifted? I'm not interested in an easy way out - just some semblance of order. (Janet)

The origin of problems for students like Janet and Holly was, at least in part, the difficulty they had in altering their own study habits. It was easy to *see* the benefits of open education, it was more difficult when they had to *live* the experience:

> I feel it's kind of disorganized. There's a lot of work that has to be done but no one knows exactly what has to be done when. (Janet)

> It's disorganized - we don't know ...we know

> things have to be done, it's just that - I know others feel the same way too; everyone talks about it ... we know it's a learning centre approach, but I feel the need for more structure. (Holly)

Furthermore, the perspectives that students had of classrooms based on their own experiences led them to anticipate problems. This was accentuated by the fact that while Early Childhood was usually defined as kindergarten to grade three, the emphasis in class was invariably on kindergarten. Creating an unstructured setting in the absence of a provincially-created curriculum was one thing. Doing the same at other grade levels where content was specified was quite another:

> ... there is the curriculum; they do have to know this by the end of grade one, by grade two ... Just taking their [the child's] interests isn't always ... might not necessarily fit into the curriculum. (Janet)

> I don't think [Dr. Mullen] is teaching us that to let them go wherever they want...they have to be prepared to go into grade one. (Dana)

Some of the students had a tendency to equate a provincially-specified course of instruction with a traditional organizational arrangement. Unfortunately, no class time was devoted to a discussion of how a learning centre approach might be implemented at other grade levels. Consequently, these concerns were never addressed.

Yet, for other students, the Early Childhood orientation posed very little difficulty. Even though there is some evidence of traditional perspectives, the students quoted below appeared to have accepted the learning centre approach for themselves and especially for young children. At first I thought this might merely be strategic compliance, but after observing and talking with them on numerous occasions during the practicum, I think not:

> I feel good about the approach, as the emphasis is on the inner needs and interests of each child as an individual. It really does make sense. Parts of me (the traditional) still see a need for some type of structured lessons, e.g., in teaching paragraphing, punctuation, conversation... (Margo)

> The ideas of self-directed learning [and] choice [and] individuality, responsibility, a positive self-concept and care are right up my alley!! (Becky)

The exemplar of this group was Leger. For him, Dr. Mullen was a role model, and what she said was irrefutable:

> I see [Dr. Mullen] as a very knowledgeful person and she knows where it's at, and I've never ever disagreed with anything she's said. With other profs I've disagreed with some of the things they've said and I've had arguments but [Dr. Mullen]... I've found we're on the same wavelength.
>
> In [Early Childhood] I sat there and everything [Dr. Mullen] said was just gold.

Later he came to see that some of what she said was very idealistic, but he didn't discard it in favor of more traditional views. Instead, it formed the basis of his criticism of his cooperating teacher and represented much that was wrong with the schooling of young children.

If we move from the general level of pedagogical stance to the more specific level of everyday teaching skills, the orientation many students exhibited for practical knowledge also forms a part of the socialization experience. As I've claimed previously, students spent a lot of time studying the content they felt was necessary for successfully completing the courses while at the same time sorting the "practical" from the "theoretical." The practical went into their resource files for future reference. I can only guess where the "theoretical" went.

The point of this discussion is that the Early Childhood students did a lot of selecting and discounting of content that was presented in class. Some accepted the general orientation in Early Childhood, others had reservations. They willingly accepted information that seemed to have some practical application, but discounted that which appeared to be unrelated to the "realities" of everyday classroom life. In the language of socialization, they were interacting with attempts by significant others to structure their entry into the profession. For some, internalized adjustment was evident to me. For others, strategic compliance was more the norm.

Both strategic compliance and internalized adjustment were difficult to discern in the university setting. It is hard to tell whether individuals have adopted a given viewpoint until they are placed in a setting where alternatives (constraining forces) are presented. The practicum represents an example of such a situation, although the inherent constraints of these field-based experiences suggests that any conclusions reached should be tentative and viewed cautiously.

Socialization in a Practicum Context. Aside from the constraints of the student teaching situation, the fact that these people are still at the preservice stage prevents us from making statements about the ultimate impact of the experience. Nevertheless, the data do allow us to understand socialization as a process over which individuals have a great deal of control.

Socialization in the Early Childhood course towards an idealistic goal resulted in a type of "reality-shock" for some of the students when they entered their assigned schools and found that their cooperating teachers were not as progressive:

> I was really disappointed. Perhaps I was too idealistic thinking that all kindergartens were run more open-ended. I did not see any evidence of free play (due to a film). I walked away feeling that the program was run based on the conveniences of the teacher more so than the needs of the children. I'll consider the next eight weeks a learning experience and a CHALLENGE. (Margo)

> I found out ... that everything we learn is not being implemented in the "real world" (as you know from my practicum placement). I think an assignment that you might consider in the future might include having to do a program where the principal of the school demands the use of Basal readers, or worksheets, or something like that that does not fit in with our philosophy. Then we won't be as shocked when we enter our classrooms and find these flawed. (Leger)

I have already made the case that the ways in which the students defined the practicum resulted in a strong tendency to conform to established practice, regardless of personal orientation. Student teachers, however, did not disregarded everything that their cooperating teachers told them just because they disagreed with the latter's organization. Even in light of the artificial nature of the practicum, most of the students defined student teaching as an immersion in the "real world" of teaching. Much of the advice they received regarding lesson planning, management and presentation of self was considered valuable. In fact, much of it may ultimately form part of each individual's style once they become full-time teachers. But, just because they adopted certain instructional procedures during the eight-week practicum does not mean they accepted them or stored them away for future use. The perspectives they held on appropriate and inappropriate instructional strategies caused them to be selective when adopting techniques employed by their cooperating teachers. For some of the key informants, these perspectives were greatly influenced by what they had learned in Early Childhood.

It has often occurred to me that if I had based my thoughts about teacher socialization during the practicum solely on the *overt behaviour* of the key informants, I might have concluded that the university had had little impact on their instructional orientation and that passive socialization was taking place. The following quotes reveal that this conclusion would have been misleading, for socialization is anything but a passive experience:

> You basically have to model your teaching in accordance with [the cooperating teacher]. I mean, if it's your classroom and you set up the routine, the rules and the way you teach with the kids, they're used to you ... So you have to respect [the fact that the children are used to a certain style] and you can't go doing things differently. So I like to watch and listen to the way she talks with the kids and pick up on how she deals with them because they are comfortable with that and I don't want to make them feel uncomfortable. (Becky)
>
> It's more bending to mold yourself into the mold that the teacher has. And you have to take your philosophy and your ideas and mold them into what she's got. (Leger)
>
> You just kind of learn to bite your tongue or play along. It's not worth the time and effort to make a big deal out of things that I don't feel comfortable with. (Margo)
>
> There's rules that have been established in there that I don't feel I have any right to change. (Melinda)
>
> There's a lot of things that I would do differently but that doesn't mean I can change it. (Margo)
>
> You can't be your own teacher; you've got to do what the teacher says so that you're

> not looking like you're coming in here and saying: "Well, your program sucks. I'm doing it my way." (Leger)
>
> Listen, I want to get a good mark. I don't have any choice. (Holly, on why she did "letter lessons" even though claiming to be opposed to them)
>
> I'll do what she says. She's the person who gives me my marks. (Cathy)
>
> I don't want to push anything. It *is* her class. ...my mark depends on it. (Jill)
>
> What can you do? It's there so what can you do? (Anise, on the emphasis given to alphabet letters in her classroom)

In a brief discussion of practicum socialization at a Canadian university, Dickie (1983:224) noted exactly the same orientation (definition of the situation) by many of the student teachers he observed. Their freedom to implement their own ideas was severely limited by their status as student teachers.

This analysis and discussion can be carried one step further. It is clear that socialization is an interactive process, and that student teachers make value judgments about the advice they receive from their cooperating teachers (and, for that matter, their faculty consultants) and about the techniques they observe. However, it should be equally obvious that some will more readily accept what they see and hear than others will. No two student teachers will necessarily view the same cooperating teacher in the same way. As Dickie (1983:224) noted, this will be influenced to some extent by the personalities of the individuals involved. It will also be influenced by the way each student defines and redefines the circumstances of their situation. For instance, one of the secondary informants, Dana, had requested a placement with a certain cooperating teacher. She had known her for some time and greatly admired her. Furthermore, she believed that school, not university, was where one learned to become a teacher:

> I'm realizing something about university that I've been through three years and I haven't learned a damn thing. [Dana did indicate that she felt her resource file was valuable]

On returning to classes next year:

> I don't think they're going to do me a damn bit of good. Maybe the Early Childhood stuff, but that's about it.
>
> I don't feel like anything else is going to do me a bit of good at all.
>
> I'll get my degree. That's all I want, that's all I care.

Dana had defined the university as a place where she was unlikely to gain much practical knowledge about teaching. At the same time, she was practice teaching in a classroom with a cooperating teacher whom she regarded very highly and it seemed that this made her more receptive to her teacher's suggestions and practices than she was to what she'd been told in university classes. I only visited her once during the eight weeks, which is, of course, an inadequate amount of time on which to base an informed judgment. But, on the basis of our numerous conversations and that one visit, I came away feeling that this was the closest to internalized adjustment that I had witnessed.

Becky's case was similar. Like Dana, she respected her cooperating teacher and held the university in less than high regard:

> To tell you the very honest total truth, I don't learn a lot at university ... I don't learn a lot there. I think practical is so much more important. It's much more meaningful.

> (On her cooperating teacher) She's super. She is. She even told me in my first year of teaching she'll help me out by writing out ... giving me copies of her lesson plans and unit plans and everything. So all I have to do is make the materials. Like she said, I'll have enough to do for my first year of teaching. Now, that's a really nice lady.

Both of these students placed a great deal of credence in the advice and style of their cooperating teachers. Furthermore, their cooperating teachers treated them as equals, as another teacher in the classroom. In this sense, the way the relationship between cooperating teacher and student teacher was defined was likely one of the contributing elements in elevating the cooperating teacher to a position of high esteem. It's likely that such teachers have more influence over student teachers than those who, in the nature of their relationships, make the student teachers *feel* like student teachers.

In other cases, notably Leger's, the cooperating teacher had much less influence. Not only had he defined her instructional style as "horrible," but she remained relatively aloof from him and offered little feedback. He remained fervent in his adherence to the Early Childhood philosophy, and continued to consider Dr. Mullen an excellent role model. Consequently, it's not surprising that he viewed his student teaching experience negatively. When I spoke again to him nearly a year later he was still convinced that he had learned nothing during the eight week practicum.

Summary

Socialization is a complex, interactive process. The ways in which students define the people and objects in their social worlds, their identification of constraining elements, the goals they hold for themselves, and the presence of role models or significant others influences the socialization experience. For each, the process is different. However, because many define the practicum as an exposure to the "real world" of teaching, students who are placed with teachers who develop close supportive relationships with their student teachers are more likely to receive greater socializing influence than had they been assigned to cooperating teachers who establish distance between themselves and their student teachers.

But, even with students, like Leger and Margo, who hold strongly to their belief in relatively unstructured learning environments, there is no way to know beforehand whether they will be able to implement their views once they become full-time teachers. Arnstine (1979:51) offers a pessimistic outlook:

> No matter what sort of understandings and attitudes students take with them to their first teaching job, most of them seem to end up, after a while, just like the teachers they criticized most highly when they started.

Knowing Margo and Leger, I'm more optimistic.

Implications for the Design of Teacher Education Programs

I've chosen to close this chapter with a brief discussion of the implications some of the findings of this study may have for the organization and administration of teacher education programs. The case in point, of course, is Highlands University. I wish to speak on a more general level. I don't intend to use the data which I have already presented as a means of analyzing what is right or wrong with this particular institution's education program. Instead, I wish to focus on the ways in which the experiences of these students - how they defined their classroom and practicum situations - could be used to make the years of professional preparation more personally meaningful. My contention, as I stated in chapter 1, is that the design and operation of teacher education programs should take into account the meanings which prospective teachers attach to the experience of being a student and a student teacher. This should not be the only basis of design, of course, but if the purpose of a professional preparation program is to have a positive and modifying influence of its students, their experience of it must be understood.

The discussion which follows focuses on three issues: the "theory" and "practice" relationship as it was evident in this study; the selection of potentially influential individuals to supervise students while practice teaching; and the need for close communication between cooperating teachers, faculty consultants and student teachers.

Theory and Practice

Douglas Roberts (1985:85) refers to discussions of theory and practice in teacher education as "an important topic but a tired one." Numerous writers have noted the existence, at least in the minds of many preservice and inservice teachers, of a discrepancy between some of what is taught in university-based teacher education programs and what actually happens in schools (Kushel and Madon, 1974; Ryan et al., 1979; McCutcheon, 1979; Carr, 1980; Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1981; Corrigan, 1982; Miller and Taylor, 1984; Fullan, 1985). For the purposes of this discussion, I will not explore the concepts of theory and practice beyond that already provided in this and earlier chapters. Instead, I wish to accept the theory-practice dichotomy as given - for it existed in the minds of many of the Early Childhood students - and briefly discuss the implications of this for the operation of teacher education programs. It is important, also, to bear in mind that the "theory" the Early Childhood students were talking about is simply that part of the program or of a specific course which is defined by them as being impractical.

The issues surrounding the content of teacher education programs traverse a "liberal-technical" continuum. This debate is concisely articulated by Joyce and Clift (1984) in a discussion of reform in teacher education. Essentially, those adopting a liberal stance on teacher education contend that pedagogy is founded on such a meagre knowledge base that prospective teachers should concentrate exclusively on the arts and sciences at university and then proceed to some form of school-based apprenticeship. Those representing the technical extreme adopt a competency-based position on teacher education based, most recently, on the research on effective teaching. Their approach is highly behaviouristic, as Joyce and Clift (1984:7) reveal: "Identify effective teachers, learn what distinguishes these teachers from the less effective, and use the effective teachers as models for novices." Those occupying intermediate positions advocate a mixture of both.

The content of most teacher education curricula at the university level appears, at least superficially, to incorporate both positions. Typically, these programs offer the liberal, represented by general education and subject matter specialization, and the technical, represented by pedagogical studies (Lanier, 1984:68). The relative emphasis given to each undoubtedly varies from one situation to another. [At Highlands University, non-education electives dominate the first year of university and generally diminish from that point on in favor of education courses.] This diversity may provide a "well-rounded" education for prospective teachers but it is not without potential problems. The central issue is synthesis, i.e., how it all comes together in the minds of the students. Shaker and Ullrich (1987:12) describe it in the following way:

> If teacher education is to benefit more fully from general education, integrative curricular experiences (e.g., critical thinking and synthesis activities) must be fostered by both liberal arts faculties and by those directly responsible for teacher preparation. Who shall reveal to the entering student the purpose of these diverse studies and what learning involvements are expected of students who enroll in them?

Here again we can return to the interactionist concept of definition of the situation. Based on the orientation many students bring with them to professional preparation and on what they hear from other students, many of these courses, notably the non-education electives and some of the "foundations" education courses, are defined as irrelevant to the practice of teaching. Thus, one function of a teacher education program is to redefine these definitions (i.e., attempt to intentionally define the situation) in such a way that students see the interrelatedness of these courses and their usefulness to classroom teachers. As Ian Craib (1984:5) points out, "theory is only a help if we can learn from it, and we can only learn from it if we can use it."

All of the Early Childhood students with whom I associated regularly spoke of how useless many of these courses were. In other words, *they didn't see* the relevance of the content for themselves as teachers; they were looking for the technical and not understanding how the liberal fit in. Perhaps this isn't surprising, for as Shaker and Ullrich (1987:12) note, there is probably little reason to expect first-year students to understand the rationale which undergirds general education (the Early Childhood students were in their *third* year and still didn't see the connections). They further point out that many of the professors these students end up with in these non-education courses are subject matter specialists, and thus likely to stress content and largely ignore context (Shaker and Ullrich, 1987:11-12). Whatever the case might be, the central issue, as far as most of the students were concerned, was relevance.

Many writers offer potentially useful accounts of how the liberal and technical can be integrated (Hodysh and Miller, 1974; Roberts, 1985; Muttart, 1986). The issue, however, for many of the Early Childhood students was not whether teacher education should just include the technical or not (although it often appeared that way superficially) but why, as so many of them put it, "we have to take these courses." They were asking, essentially, for someone to show them how these courses relate to teacher preparation.

Although relevance should constitute a main theme in education courses, the issue ultimately comes down to individual instructors and individual students. Instructors should recognize that some, if not all, of their students are making judgments about the course content in terms of its practicality. By challenging students to relate the abstract aspects of the curriculum to the concrete aspects of classroom teaching, instructors can assist students in understanding that being a teacher involves *knowing* as well as *doing*. In this process, the perspectives students hold on teaching and learning are more likely to become apparent, and thus be easier to open to debate and modification (re-definition).

In the first-year non-education electives, however, the instructors are unlikely concerned with the relationship between course content and classroom teaching. The onus here, then, is on the faculty of the School of Education to display the relationship of these courses to teaching or teachers. This might be done by offering a first-year course which examines pedagogy and relates the various components of the program to the needs of classroom teachers. In this way students may develop an understanding of why they are being asked to take certain courses and how these courses can benefit them as classroom teachers.

A first-year course may not be the answer. But unless coordinated attempts are made by all instructors to show the relevance of their course content to classroom teachers, many students will continue to define these courses as useless and they will turn their attention elsewhere. Course content which has not been defined as meaningful will not have much of an impact on students. As Jerome Bruner states in The Process of Education (1977:31): "The best way to create interest in a subject is to render it worth knowing, which means to make the knowledge gained usable in one's thinking beyond the situation in which the learning has occurred." He was speaking, of course, of the education of young children. But based on the ways in which many of the Early Childhood students defined their coursework, it is just as applicable at the university level. The task is to modify the ways students think about their courses; to re-define their situations.

Selecting Significant Others

The Early Childhood instructors at Highlands University adopted a common position on appropriate pedagogy and learning environments for young children. While visiting different schools during the practicum, and talking with the cooperating teachers, I detected evidence of a general movement toward kindergartens which are more unstructured. I was told that this change was being reinforced through contact between kindergarten teachers and government consultants. Leger's cooperating teacher was being "pressured" to reduce the number of worksheets she used with the children in favor of more child-directed activities. And on the one occasion when I visited Dana's classroom, her cooperating teacher told me that she was currently in a transition stage and moving slowly from a structured to an unstructured instructional arrangement.

Still, many of the students were placed with teachers who they defined as "structured" and they were disturbed by the contrast between "what is" and "what should be," a situation which was not helped by faculty consultants whose beliefs clashed with those of the cooperating teachers. The cumulative effect of these two discrepancies was that many of the students felt they were being compromised. In other words, they weren't "allowed" to try out the ideas they had adopted from the Early Childhood classes, and they had to deal with the often conflicting expectations of the faculty consultant and the cooperating teacher.

This suggests that the selection of these significant individuals should be a very careful procedure. Many students define the practicum as the "real world," and are quite susceptible to the practices of their cooperating teachers. And even for those who resist and put on a performance, the very fact of having become "rutted" into a routine (as in Leger's reference to himself as a "robot") may have a significant impact when they become full-time teachers. If the Early Childhood instructors wish to reinforce their position on learning environments then cooperating teachers and faculty consultants need to be selected who themselves adopt this stance. At Highlands University, the difficulties in accomplishing this are immense. The School of Education is large and requires a great number of placements each year in local schools. Teachers are asked to volunteer, and there is no guarantee that those who become cooperating teachers will be suitable examples for their student teachers. Faculty consultants are picked from lists of graduate students who have applied for financial assistance, from professors who have volunteered to act as consultants, and from either retired local teachers or teachers who, for whatever reason, are unemployed. Some of the faculty consultants in this study were experienced in kindergarten instruction, others were not. Some, in the opinions of the informants, seemed to be at a loss when it came to giving advice to kindergarten teachers. Other consultants created expectations which, again in the opinions of the informants, clashed with those of the cooperating teacher. The effect, consequently, for some of the Early Childhood students, was that they were deprived of a supportive environment in which to try out their own ideas and forced instead to conform to the cooperating teacher's expectations and to find ways to satisfy their consultant.

Communication in Supporting Relationships

The relationships which student teachers are able to establish with significant others during the practicum have an important influence on the nature of the experience. McIntyre and Norris (1980:1), writing about communication between members of the student teaching triad, point out that a lack of communication between members contributes to stressful experiences. They suggest that the success of these relationships depends greatly on the ability of the members of this triad to communicate with each other.

Morris and Morris (1980:58-59), in a review of the *Education Index* since 1950, identified four sources of stress in student teaching: student behaviour, relationships with supervisors, self-adequacy and learner achievement. On relationships with supervisors they note:

> To the student teacher, the supervising teacher and university supervisor are two of the most significant persons in the student teaching experience. The student teacher must establish interpersonal relationships and a level of performance which consistently satisfy both supervisors.

They also point out that other researchers on stress in student teaching have:

> found that the lack of freedom to choose methods and materials of instruction, communication about rules and procedures, clear specification of tasks and roles, willingness of the supervising teacher ~~to~~ relinquish control of the class, and evaluation of student teachers performance were important areas of stress.

For the students in this study, the tensions they experienced during practice teaching were frequently related to a lack of communication with significant others. However, the problem was not an *inability* to communicate with either the cooperating teacher or the faculty consultant; it was more a feeling that open communication had to be *suppressed* in order to ensure that relationships evolved in a satisfactory manner. The reasons for this have been noted numerous times in this document: a desire to do well, which is also a contributing factor in making student teachers feel they have to conform to the practices of their cooperating teachers; their status as student teacher, which places them "below" cooperating teachers and faculty consultants; a sense that being open about areas of disagreement might somehow sour the relationships they are trying to establish with their significant others. There were, of course, exceptions to this, such as Cathy's insistence on bringing her views on appropriate pedagogy to bear in her classroom, or Margo's collegial association with her faculty consultant which allowed her to be "up front" with this supervisor. But generally, the "performances" which the student teachers gave meant suppressing their personal views on certain issues.

It is for reasons like this that close cooperation and communication between members of the triad, and their respective organizations, is essential if the student teaching experience is to be a beneficial one. If the purpose of the practicum is to allow these students to practice what they've been taught in schools of education, all participants (student teachers, faculty consultants, cooperating teachers and university instructors) must, together, establish realistic goals and expectations for the experience. Cooperating teachers and faculty consultants should be selected who reinforce the approaches advocated by university instructors. In this way, the students' sense of performance and associated tensions should be reduced, allowing them to practice in less threatening situations.

If the practicum does not reinforce the positions presented in university classes - and for some of the students in this study, it didn't - then it is a questionable inclusion in a teacher education program. Furthermore, if the positions advocated in university classes are themselves contradictory, or uninformed by up-to-date research, then teacher education programs have no place in a university setting. If the purpose of professional preparation is simply to socialize students to existing practice, then, as Ratzlaff and Grimmett (1985:27) point out, teacher education may best be removed from academic settings and accomplished through field-based programs at the hands of experienced teachers.

Conclusions

I did not set out to test hypotheses about the teacher education experience. Instead, mine has been a study which more closely approximates Glaser and Strauss' (1967) notion of grounded theory. But even here there are differences, for I have refrained from following a prescribed data collection and analysis technique. It seemed to me from the outset that if I wished to develop some degree of understanding of what it was like to be a student of teaching, I should allow the people and circumstances to have a substantial influence on the nature of the fieldwork. I rationalized that an initially unstructured (have I associated with Early Childhood students too long?) approach to data collection would evolve into a more structured schedule once I became familiar with individuals and settings. This is basically what happened.

In keeping with this approach to social research, the "conclusions" which follow are not conclusions in a traditional sense. Nor are they stated as hypotheses, for that might lead some future researcher to think that he or she can construct a test to "verify" what I have found. Gareth Morgan (1983a:383) tells us that, except in controlled circumstances, we should replace the idea that we can ever "know" something with a pervasive sense of uncertainty. I see this as a healthy orientation, at least in social science, for it suggests that what we *think* we know should be viewed in a problematic way.

Thus, in the few paragraphs which follow I relate my emergent understanding of Early Childhood teacher education and sincerely hope that no one will interpret this as "truth" in a generalizable sense of that word. At best, I hope it will spur others to explore further and delve deeper than I have done.

Coursework

Prior to undertaking the fieldwork I posed three questions which were intended to guide the inquiry. The first of these dealt with coursework: What aspects of the university classroom experience take on significant meaning for the teacher candidate?

Different people may interpret the same situation in different ways. This was reinforced time and again while I was conducting the fieldwork. After leaving a class in Educational Administration or Early Childhood I'd find that reactions to what had just happened would vary from group to group or from individual to individual. Yet, beneath many of these different interpretations was a common foundation. This common foundation lay in the orientation students had towards the coursework.

Most of the students with whom I associated held two common definitions of their professional preparation. One was that they should be provided with the basics of how to go about being a teacher. Numerous students told me that this was the biggest failing of their baccalaureate degree; that they were receiving too much "theory" and not enough of the "practical" information relating to the day-to-day realities of classroom teachers. This search for practical knowledge manifested itself in daily comments and quips. Few hid the fact that they were interested in building resource files of "practical" ideas for use when they became tenured teachers. It was a pervasive aspect of classroom life.

The second definition many students held for their coursework was that overall success was important. Many of these students were high achievers when they entered Early Childhood, so the desire to obtain excellent grades was not surprising. But regardless of their personal motivation, a common element emerged: that how well they did in these courses (in terms of their final numerical grade) would have a significant impact on how they were viewed by prospective employers. Thus, everyday classroom life also involved a continuous search for ways to clearly structure all that they believed was expected of them in order to avoid ambiguity. This manifested itself in the frequent questions to instructors and classmates about what, *specifically*, had to be done for this or that assignment, how long it was to be, what writing style was to be used, how it would be evaluated, and where the most relevant resouces were to be found. I'm sure many individuals derived much personal pleasure from these assignments. But it was apparent in their questions and comments that assignments were being done for the *instructors*, not for themselves. It was an added bonus if they felt they had received personal gain (in terms of acquiring "practical" information) from doing these required activities. I previously referred to this as "working the system." I don't think there is a better way to describe it.

Practice Teaching

The second question posed at the outset of the inquiry was: What aspects of the practicum experience take on significant meaning for the teacher candidates?

Essentially, a similar orientation prevailed towards the practicum as towards coursework. If marks in the courses were defined as important, success in the practicum was considered crucial. This was the "make or break" component of their four-year program; it was where they found out if they could "cut it."

For the four key informants, and most of the secondary informants, their desire to do well in their placements had a substantial influence on how they went about being student teachers. They made every attempt to establish good relationships with their cooperating teachers and faculty consultants. This meant living up to the expectations which they felt were being made of them. In other words, they relegated their personal beliefs about pedagogy and appropriate learning environments to the background and concentrated on doing the sorts of things that they felt would be viewed favorably. While this caused some individuals a lot of "backstage" distress, it was considered a reality of student teaching, because, in addition to their desire to obtain good evaluations, their status as student teachers was generally defined as subservient to their cooperating teachers. That is, since these classrooms were not theirs, and since these children were used to a certain routine, they had little choice but to conform to the established structure.

As a result of situations such as these, student teaching was a type of performance (for that matter, "working the system" may be viewed similarly). Student teachers attempted to intentionally influence the definitions others - notably their cooperating teachers and faculty consultants - formed of them. Aspects of classroom life which interfered with this performance, such as behaviour problems, placed the student teachers in a difficult position.

Underneath this performance, or, in dramaturgic terminology, "backstage," students had to cope with the fact that they were doing things that they believe they wouldn't do in their own classrooms. This placed varying degrees of stress on many of the key and secondary informants. Some saw themselves as being compromised, and didn't like what they saw. Others were able to "take it in stride" and realize that, when they had they own classrooms, they could do things differently. Different people coped with this in different ways. Melinda was relatively unfazed by the nature of her situation. Leger, a year later, was still so upset by his experience that he was giving serious consideration to switching vocations.

One of the most stressful aspects of the student teaching experience for many of the informants concerned their relationships with cooperating teachers and faculty consultants. In some cases the expectations of these two supervisors were in conflict. Students felt pulled in opposite directions in their attempts to meet the expectations of both. Others questioned the actual function of the consultant, complaining about infrequent visits and incompetent behaviour. It was apparent for many that much of their anxiety related, not to relationships with children (for most, this was a source of satisfaction), but to their relationship with one or both of their supervisors.

Relating the Two

The third question I had posed to guide the inquiry was: Are aspects of the university experience altered or reinforced as the teacher candidate moves through the practicum?

There are two answers to this question: yes and no. For the most part students noted a significant discrepancy between what they were being taught in Early Childhood classes and what was actually taking place in elementary classrooms. In this sense, the so-called theory-practice dichotomy was reinforced. In university classes they learned that "appropriate" learning environments are those which minimize the actual amount of directing done by the teacher and emphasize a lot of self-direction on behalf of the children. For many, the negative qualities of instructional organization were epitomized by row after row of desks with children doing the same workbook exercises at the same time. While none of them, with the exception of Melinda, were placed in classrooms where this was the case, the majority of them found their settings to be more structured than they had been led to believe was appropriate.

What they did as student teachers did not reinforce what they had been taught was appropriate pedagogy for early childhood teachers. In this sense, the value of the experience was questionable. While they learned much about lesson planning and other day-to-day routines, they generally didn't learn how to create the sort of learning environment that had been championed in Early Childhood classes.

Yet, for all of this, I sensed that while there was a degree of disillusionment with the "idealistic" teachings in Early Childhood classes, criticism of pedagogical techniques tended to be directed at practitioners rather than at Dr. Mullen or other Early Childhood instructors. [There are obvious exceptions to this, notably Dana.] In other words, many of the informants continued to believe that open or unstructured learning environments were more appropriate than traditional ones.

The major criticism of the university was that it didn't provide them with the everyday basics of being a teacher (for that matter, this criticism was levelled before they began student teaching). Teaching practice reinforced this view, for most of them looked to their cooperating teachers for hints on such activities as lesson planning and classroom management. But on the issues of appropriate pedagogy and appropriate learning environments, most of the criticism was directed at practitioners. In this sense, I don't believe that the impact of university coursework - especially that in Early Childhood - was lost through practice teaching. At least, not yet.

Future Considerations

Making recommendations for future action based on the results of one case study carries with it a certain amount of risk. Questions can always be raised about whether the findings of this study are in any way representative of other education students in Highlands University, let alone other universities elsewhere in Canada. The question, of course, is one of generalizability, and questions of this nature are always problematic in social science research. Thus, instead of referring to these as recommendations, I have chosen to call them future considerations.

These considerations are directed to individuals occupying different positions: to Dr. Mullen and other instructors in Early Childhood education at Highlands University; to administrators responsible for overseeing the coursework and practicum at Highlands University; to individuals in similar positions to those just mentioned at other universities; and to other researchers who think they might want to investigate the everyday life of undergraduate education students.

These are not plans for action, although further investigation might reveal that action is necessary. Instead, they represent my thoughts on issues in teacher education which, judging from the results of this inquiry, deserve careful examination.

CONSIDERATION 1

If the Early Childhood students in this study are in any way typical of those in other programs at other universities, the issue of relevance is significant for teacher educators. Students preparing to become teachers expect their university coursework to address what they understand to be the day-to-day realities of classroom teachers. In order to make the preservice years more personally meaningful, university instructors should maintain a constant awareness that their students are searching for useful information. This means anticipating and addressing the unasked question: what does this have to do with teaching?

CONSIDERATION 2

On the issue of "theory" in education, I have a suggestion. Theories are attempts to explain phenomena and help us to understand them better. However, the concept of theory in social science is slightly different than that in the natural sciences. Social theories cannot be regarded as laws, at least not with the same degree of predictability. Therefore, before the content of a theory can be examined, the nature of "theory" itself needs to be explored. It is the duty of the university instructor to delve into this in the classroom. Students must be made aware that theories are not invalidated simply because they fail to conform to personal experience. They must be taught something of the usefulness of, and the problems associated with theory and theory development. For this purpose, I recommend Chapter 1 in Ian Craib's Modern Social Theory (1984) for his insights into the nature of social theory.

CONSIDERATION 3

I have mentioned that it is the responsibility of university instructors to help students understand the relationship of their courses for the career they have chosen. Unfortunately, the instructors of elective courses taken outside schools of education may have little idea themselves how their subjects relate to teaching. Yet, these courses have been selected by decision makers in schools of education for education students. To fill this gap, the obligation to establish the relevance of these liberal education courses for students must fall on those who prepare the curriculum. I think that one elective in the first term of the first year might be sacrificed in favor of a regular seminar which explores the structuring of a baccalaureate education degree. Some might argue that students at this stage are unable to appreciate the value of certain courses. Perhaps this is true, but I think it is a poor argument for not addressing the issue. Students enter university with images of what classroom teaching is all about. Such a seminar might redefine professional preparation for many students and provide them with an emergent understanding of why they are being asked to register in certain courses. It might also provide a valuable forum for students and instructors to explore what it is to be a classroom teacher.

CONSIDERATION 4

As I explain in the last chapter, I am presently unconvinced of the value of a practicum in a teacher education program. But if we proceed on the assumption that the student teaching experience is likely to remain an integral component of such programs, teacher educators need to be clear on the answer to one question: What purpose is a practicum intended to serve? Initially the question appears silly, for I suspect that most would quickly respond that practica provide students with an opportunity to exercise their pedagogical skills in a setting with real children and under the supervision of an experienced practitioner. But all of this presumes that what is being practiced in classrooms is currently defined as appropriate pedagogy; it presumes that cooperating teachers are suitable role models for education students. If this premise is false, then teacher educators need to reconsider what students are learning during the time they spend in school classrooms. It seems to me - and I obviously have the experiences of the Early Childhood students in this study in mind - that teacher educators need to select cooperating teachers very carefully to ensure that their students are placed in an environment where they will be encouraged to apply what they have learned at university. If this is not possible, or if it is not the purpose of a practicum, then student teaching possibly has no place in a preservice preparation program.

CONSIDERATION 5

During the practicum one of the most important issues was the relationship each student teacher shared with his or her cooperating teacher and faculty consultant. Many of the informants felt as though they were performing for these individuals. Perhaps in a supervisory situation this is unavoidable. The more stressful situations, however, were those where the expectations of the two supervisors appeared to clash. There are at least two ways in which this issue can be addressed. The first is through the careful selection of cooperating teachers and faculty consultants. All reasonable efforts should be made to ensure that the supervisors share similar views on pedagogy. The second is to provide the opportunity for the members of the student teaching triad to meet prior to the practicum in order to exchange views on reasonable expectations for the student teacher. It could also provide an opportunity for open discussion on the nature of each individual's role.

CONSIDERATION 6

The last consideration pertains to further research. At various stages in the conduct of this study I thought that much of what I was seeing would, by itself, provide worthy material for further inquiry. Short of providing a long list of possibilities, I feel that any one of the themes described in chapters 4 and 5 could be investigated in greater depth that I have been able to do. In spite of my time and efforts, I leave this study thinking that I have only glimpsed the world of preservice teacher education.

CHAPTER 7

LOOKING BACK

Introduction

In this concluding chapter I wish to reflect briefly on what has passed since I undertook this project. I view reflection in a manner similar to that of Gareth Morgan (1983b): as a conversation. It is not something which I am beginning as I write these words but is, instead, a process which has been ongoing from the day the study was conceived. During this time it has been a conversation on appropriate ways to conduct the study, on the nature of what I was seeing and hearing during the months in the field, on suitable ways of conducting myself in my relations with the informants in the study, and on the concepts, categories and themes with which I wrestled during the interminable hours of data analysis. Sometimes it has been a conversation with others, always with myself. It goes beyond the interactionist notion of conversation, for the very act of thinking is a conversation with one's self. It is, as Morgan (1983b:374) points out, a "critical reflection" which serves as a basis for action or an assessment of actions taken.

There are two areas on which I will focus: the research process itself, and the influence which this study has had on my own thoughts about teacher education.

The Research Process

Stress. On January 31,1985 I began the six month process of gaining access to the Elementary Division of Highlands University. Four days later, on February 4, I made the following entry in my jounal:

> I am beginning to feel the stress of the process of attempting to gain admittance to the [Division]. I live in fear of the whole thing collapsing in front of me. I'm keeping my fingers crossed and trying to be very politic and non-threatening in my movements.

This was the start of what would become a two and a half year period of high stress levels. In an article on this topic, Zigarmi and Zigarmi (1980) identify six aspects of ethnographic-type studies which may be sources of stress for researchers: stress related to gaining and maintaining access; stress related to work overload; stress related to their degree of participation; stress derived from the need for acceptance and identity; stress related to data presentation and distribution; and the stress related to the autonomy of fieldwork and the problems of doing credible research. All of these were sources of stress for me.

There were at least four periods during which I felt the most pressure. The first was the six month period of gaining access. As I indicate in the excerpt above, I was ever cognizant of the fact that the study could end before it began.

The second stressful period was during my first meetings with the Early Childhood students. I had convinced Dr. Mullen and the Chairperson of the Elementary Division that mine was a worthy study and that I would conduct myself in a professional and ethical way. Now I was faced with the task of selling myself to the students. I shall never forget just how dry my mouth was on the day of our first meeting when it was my turn to introduce myself to the class. I'm sure I had rehearsed what I would say numerous times before the meeting. But when I was called upon to speak, I couldn't remember a word. Instead, I babbled for a few minutes about who I was and what I wanted to do, and continually scanned the room hoping for an approving nod or some other indication of interest. When I finished, and Dr. Mullen asked if anyone had any objections to me joining the class, I held my breath thinking, again, that the study could crumble before my eyes.

The second meeting with the informants was also difficult. This was held about a month after the first get-together, and I didn't have the security of Dr. Mullen's presence. But it went well, and I began to see that I was on the road to building good relationships with these students.

The third period of high stress were the four months of fieldwork when I joined the students for their classes and followed them into the schools. The stress was omnipresent and was related to a constant scrutiny of my own behaviour; to a realization that the trusting relationships I was building with these students could be destroyed in a minute by an unwise comment on my part, or by doing something I had promised I wouldn't. I recall two incidents which worried me particularly.

One occurred during a visit to Melinda's classroom during the first weeks of student teaching. I had phoned her earlier and obtained permission to visit. When the day came I arrived early and sat in the school library where I knew she would be bringing the children. As soon as she entered the room I could tell something was wrong. She looked angry, and when she spotted me I could see in her eyes that she'd forgotten I was coming. She took the kids to the reading area, then came over and sat beside me.

Melinda is usually quite cheerful, but any hint of cheer was absent that day. She confirmed my suspicion that she'd forgotten I would be there, then informed me that she'd had a particularly difficult morning. She wasn't the type to ask me to leave and return another day, but I decided that I would cut short this visit and left shortly after lunch hour. When I called her that evening, she told me she was exhausted and asked, uncharacteristically, if I would mind calling the next day. This never happened again, and I ended the fieldwork feeling very pleased with the relationship I had with Melinda. But the incident confirmed for me the fragility of a study of this type. As part of the agreement to be involved in the project, all of the participants were told that they could withdraw at any time for whatever reason. For a few stressful hours that day, I was afraid Melinda might just choose that option.

A second stressful experience occurred when I was having participants read early drafts of chapters to ensure that they were quoted properly or that their meaning hadn't been misinterpreted. The incident involved Anise, and it was one that I could have predicted from my first contact with her. In my descriptions of Anise in the body of this work, I have depicted her as someone who very quickly comes to the point; as someone who can be critical of others but who doesn't receive criticism well. In Chapter 4, I related an incident that occurred after one of the Early Childhood classes where Anise, feeling particularly annoyed about something that had just happened, launched into an assault on certain aspects of the Early Childhood course. [Anise told me prior to this encounter that she felt comfortable talking to me; that I wasn't someone who would betray her confidence in me.] Months later, when I was writing Chapter 4, I recounted her comments as an example of some of the infrequent criticism of Dr. Mullen. I *knew* as I wrote the story that Anise was not going to pleased with it, yet I felt I was telling it accurately and that it was important enough to include. My concern was not that Anise would read it and be upset because she came out sounding like a "bitch" (her term). Instead, I was worried that she would feel I'd betrayed the trust she'd placed in me and that it would consequently destroy what I felt was a good relationship. [I feel strongly about the relationships I had with all the informants in this study. However, I particularly valued that with Anise because she always seemed so blatantly honest. I don't mean to imply that the others were dishonest, but Anise always, I think, stated exactly how she felt without a moment's hesitation.]

Once I'd finished Chapter 4, I began contacting many of the Early Childhood students whom I'd quoted at length or referred to in some detail (twelve in all) so that they might read the chapter. Anise was, of course, one of these, but I was so uneasy about how she would respond to that one incident (I referred to her numerous times throughout the chapter, but this reference was the only one that concerned me) that I procrastinated about sending her the document until all of the others had read it. Then I arranged to meet her in a local cafeteria to hand the document to her. At the time, I told her ~~that~~ if she had any concerns about anything I'd written we could get together and discuss them. She told me her schedule was very crowded but that she'd get back to me when she could. From the way she said it, I gathered this would mean approximately a week or two. She called that evening. In her most diplomatic voice, she said she had scanned the document and had some concerns (I sensed that it was taking every bit of self control for her to use such mild terminology) about the way she came across in that particular incident. While she said that my account of the situation was accurate, she felt that I should provide a little more contextual information so that readers would understand how she viewed coursework and thereby better appreciate her reaction to the problem. We talked for quite a while, and I hung up wondering whether I'd compromised the trust she placed in me. Three thoughts crossed my mind as I re-lived the conversation afterwards: that the changes she wanted were slightly different than I had expected; that I could make these changes without diminishing the impact of the incident; and that I didn't really want to know what she was saying about me in private.

I can truthfully say that I agonized over this incident for many months, from the time I first wrote it until we finally worked out a way of relating it that was acceptable to both of us. I didn't want her to think she'd been betrayed, and while I felt that the inclusion of this incident was important to the text, I was prepared to remove it if she so requested. Fortunately she didn't, and I think we're still friends.

These are just two examples of stressful situations. There were countless others. This type of research was, for me, a very draining experience. As Tardif (1984:195-198) relates after conducting a study not dissimilar to this, it is not knowing what direction to take or what to expect that contributes to one's doubt and insecurity in a study like this.

The fourth period of time which was very stressful occurred when the other students were reading sections of my work to ensure that they had been quoted and interpreted accurately. I could have asked them to do this by simply reading sections of transcripts. Instead, I asked them to read whole chapters so that they could gain a sense for the context in which their words were being used. I was constantly apprehensive that something would not be acceptable to somebody.

Reflections on Interpretive Research. I have frequently asked myself why I chose to do this type of research. I've wondered whether I was simply caught up in a wave of enthusiasm for interpretive inquiries or a rejection of positivistic approaches, or whether, in fact, there was a deeper reason. In many of the courses I've taken in my doctoral program, the debate about "ways of knowing" was ubiquitous. Burrell and Morgan's Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis (1979) served as a primer for many of us, and those who were truly interested in alternative ways of investigating the social world delved deeper into the theoretical literature. The "buzz words" were "qualitative" and "quantitative," and my cohort group seemed to be divided into "camps" on these grounds. [Those who have read this thesis will note that I have avoided labelling this inquiry as "qualitative." I have said elsewhere (MacKinnon et al., 1987) that I think this designation has lost a standard meaning, and every educational conference I attend reinforces this belief.]

I'd like to be able to say that I chose the methods I did solely because I think it was the most appropriate way of addressing the questions I asked. This is only partially true. There is no doubt in my mind that I believe an interpretive approach to research *was* the best way to investigate the experience of teacher education. However, the issue is not why I chose these methods, but why I asked these particular questions. Certainly my reading of the teacher education literature revealed that preservice preparation hadn't been investigated in this way very frequently. But I think there's more to it than this. I suspect the underlying basis for the questions I've asked and the way I've gone about answering them is tied up in who I am, in how I see the world, and in how I believe one best comes to understand someone else's experiences. It's not the method that attracted me. It's the assumptions that underlie it. I suspect that even if I had selected another topic to investigate, I would have asked similar questions and gone about it in much the same way.

Shulman (1981:5) tells us that arguments over methods generate more fervour amongst scientists than most other topics. To some extent this is good, for it represents a continuation of the conversation on ways of investigating the world. But it can, and, I believe, has, led to an over-emphasis on method in the qualitative-quantitative debate. For unlike positivistic research, validity in interpretive inquiries is not method-bound. In this sense I think that the thrust for standardized methods, as represented in the works of writers such as LeCompte and Goetz (1982), Miles and Huberman (1984) and, to some extent, Lincoln and Guba (1985), to name but a few, is misplaced. Their arguments exemplify an attempt to incorporate non-traditional (though this is rapidly changing) techniques into a traditional research framework. Perhaps this is qualitative research, but it is not interpretive.

In this sense I think that the attempt to transfer certain concepts from one type of research to another is inappropriate. A concept such as "validity" is a typical example. We can talk about validity in interpretive research, but we won't be talking about it in the same way as we would with positivistic research. It is conceptualized differently. I well remember the occasional doubts I had when analyzing the data and putting them into written, coherent form. I worried that because of the overwhelming quantity of data I was dealing with, I had taken shortcuts to make it more manageable. I worried that maybe I hadn't listened to the tapes carefully enough and was telling a skewed story. But as the informants read the chapters and, one by one, told me that they had been represented accurately (even though, in some cases, they might not have liked the way they came across), I realized that this was the most appropriate test of validity. It wasn't whether I had followed the proper procedures, but whether the story I told was acceptable to those involved.

Generalizability is another example. Case study researchers are always plagued with questions about whether their findings apply beyond their own immediate context. The question, however, should not be one of whether what I have found applies to all other education students, but whether there is anything to be learned about teacher education from a study of a few students. Geertz (1973:44) provides one possible answer:

> The notion that unless a cultural phenomenon is empirically universal it cannot reflect anything about the nature of man is about as logical as the notion that because sickle-cell anemia is, fortunately, not universal, it cannot tell us anything about human genetic processes.

I have undertaken this project assuming that human behaviour is context-dependent. This is not to say that every episode of interaction is so unique as not to bear similarity to other situations in other places. But, if we wish to gain a fair appreciation of human experience, we need to understand it in the situations in which it occurs. To this end I have tried to avoid the "context-stripping" that Mishler (1979:2) ascribes to other research designs, although I fully realize that there are aspects of what went on in the schools and university classrooms where this inquiry was centered which I undoubtedly missed or, in the interests of narrowing the research focus, overlooked. In the final analysis, I believe, that for all the possible drawbacks, I have been able to provide a deeper look into the world of preservice teacher preparation than more traditional research designs would have allowed.

Teacher Education

The Professional School Within the University. Almost from the moment I entered the first class in Early Childhood at Highlands University, I have been asking myself the question: what is the role of a professional school within a university?

The issue first confronted me when it became obvious that the orientation of the Early Childhood instructors was to present *one* perspective on how young children learn. It initially seemed to me that this was a rather narrow way to approach such a complex topic. It was the same in Educational Administration. Much of the time was spent dealing with "codes" of one sort or another (e.g., a code of professional conduct). We didn't *critically* examine these codes in an attempt to determine the appropriateness or inappropriateness of specific entries. Rather, we accepted the elements which made up each code and approached them as "this is what teachers do and don't do." I noted in my journal after leaving one of the first EdAdmin classes that I had rarely experienced such a strong sense of being socialized into a profession. While we frequently debated possible interpretations of various codes, we never examined the suitability of the code itself.

This "narrowness" bothered me. Since that time I have frequently engaged in a mental wrestling match on the issue. On the one hand it seems to me that university education should provide a forum for the critical examination of various relevant topics. Thus, students in Early Childhood should have the opportunity to explore the advantages and disadvantages of structured and unstructured learning environments. Shortly after I completed the fieldwork for this study, I chanced upon one of the Early Childhood students in the halls of Highlands University. She told me that she was taking a course in the area of literacy. While she described it as an excellent course, she lamented the fact that only one viewpoint was presented. It seemed to her that those educators who had developed other reading programs - programs which have had a significant impact on our understanding of literacy in the past - shouldn't be ignored as if their contributions are now insignificant.

On the other hand, perhaps a critical examination of academic topics is the function of *graduate* study. A friend and dean from a Canadian school of education recently told me of a conversation he had with an educator in a similar position at a respected British university. During their discussion, the British educator said that at his university they consider baccalaureate teacher preparation to focus on the teaching of "survival skills."

It is apparent to me that this latter orientation is the one that the majority of students involved in this study wanted and expected from their undergraduate program. They wanted to have their entry into the teaching profession structured before they entered the classroom. They wanted to eliminate ambiguity and be told "this is how you teach." I don't believe that many of them were interested in exploring various philosophical positions on appropriate learning environments for young children.

What, then, is the function of a professional school of education in a university context? Obviously, any professional school has as its basic mandate the preparation of practitioners. In this sense, it is different from other university programs. Palmer (1985:56) points out that this means that questions of a practical nature frequently replace those of a more theoretical character. University educators have to be aware of and responsive to problems which exist in the field. This places these schools in an untenable position. Those activities which would legitimate their presence in a university environment (research, theory development, publication) are frequently those which are viewed with some distain by practitioners (Palmer, 1985:56-57).

Having taken these courses myself, having observed and interacted with the Early Childhood students as they underwent professional preparation, and having read much in the area of teacher education, I find myself leaning strongly in one direction on the issue of the function of a school of education. While the preparation of practitioners is the obvious function of these schools, this preparation must be rooted in a firm theoretical foundation. The issue is much less one of how effective teachers behave and more one of the understandings such teachers bring to the classroom. It is not the method that is important *per se*. It is the conceptual understanding that undergirds action. As Palmer (1985:60) relates:

> Teaching is not primarily a technical task dominated by specialized knowledge and behaviors unique to the teaching role. It is a uniquely human task requiring the exercise of intelligence, thought, and concern in the complex human interactions that vary infinitely among students and teachers. While the study of the teaching-learning context is useful, the study of literature, the arts, philosophy, and social and natural sciences may be more essential to the making of a teacher. Technique has little value unless the teacher understands the human condition, is able to develop and maintain an effective relationship with students, and has a carefully developed theory concerning the place of formal learning in the contemporary world and the place of the teacher in the process of formal learning.

Perhaps it is the idealist in me that finds refuge in orientations such as Palmer's. Or perhaps it is the realization that most action is based on the interpretation of situations and that individuals with a broader understanding of the social world can more intelligently interpret each circumstance as it arises.

At the same time, teacher educators are confronted with the accomplishment of a complex task in a relatively short time span. As these programs are presently structured, there is little opportunity to pursue diverse perspectives on appropriate pedagogy or on the development of young children. Consequently, instructors need to make clear the assumptions on which they are basing their course content, then proceed to give the students a thorough exploration of that particular perspective. In my opinion, this is what the Early Childhood instructors at Highlands University are doing. University instructors, however, also have an obligation to acknowledge for their students that the perspective they have adopted may not be in common practice in school classrooms. They need to clarify the assumptions on which "those" practitioners are operating, and explain why they feel their perspective is superior. I didn't see much of this in the one Early Childhood class I attended. Maybe it is done in other courses. But I feel it would have been beneficial to have a regular conversation ongoing in the class about the appropriateness of the preferred perspective over the others.

A Problem with the Practicum. In a recent article in the Journal of Teacher Education, Cruickshank and Armaline provide a concise history of field experiences in American teacher education programs. From their treatise, it is abundantly clear that practica are rooted in a belief that one learns to teach by teaching. Programs where students had little exposure to field settings were regularly criticized for their remoteness from reality. And even though preservice programs are currently coming under regular attack, particularly in the United States, most critics agree that whatever else might be dispensable, practica are not (Cruickshank and Armaline, 1986:35).

The problem with practica, as I see it, is the difference between what they are intended to accomplish and what students may actually be learning while they are in the schools. There is little doubt that they are designed on an apprenticeship model, where a novice is sent to the field to observe and learn from an experienced practitioner. In fact, Salzillo and Van Fleet (1977:28) challenge that "no study has shown conclusively that student teaching has any unique educational component other than assimilation." Cruickshank and Armaline (1986:36) list a number of specific purposes of practice teaching which include offering an opportunity for prospective teachers to receive feedback on their performance, adding meaning and realism to preservice preparation, providing an opportunity for novices to gauge whether they've selected the appropriate career, and affording an opportunity for student teachers to learn the "elements of a profession." But if the experienced practitioners are practicing a style of teaching that does not conform to current pedagogical thinking, or if their practice is at odds with the philosophy (if one exists) of university-based instruction, then the value of the practicum is questionable.

This was the situation with the Early Childhood students in this study. They were given (what I consider to be) a reasonably thorough grounding in a child-centered, child-directed view of learning, only to be sent into schools where, in many cases, teachers had a different view of appropriate modes of learning.

The central issue here is the transfer of theory into practice. If all of the references to a theory-practice dichotomy in teacher education are true, then the transfer of theory into practice is difficult enough without having it forestalled by an inappropriate field placement. The Early Childhood situation at Highlands University is a case in point, albeit arguably an extreme one. The students had a difficult enough time adjusting to the structural arrangements in the Early Childhood classrooms and learning to appreciate the value of self-directed learning. For each one of them, this mode of teaching and learning clashed with the more traditional views they held. It required them to change their beliefs about what effective teachers do and how they relate to children and change of this nature, Fullan (1982:37) tells us, can be very "deep, striking at the core of learned skills and conceptions of education, creating doubts about purposes, sense of competence, and self-concept." It requires much support and reinforcement. The field placement in a teacher education program has to be viewed as one of the major vehicles for reinforcing (or not reinforcing) change.

If we accept that the dominant purpose of a practicum is to uncritically socialize prospective teachers into their profession, I suggest that it is ill-placed in a university teacher education program. In a major study of the circumstances of schooling in the United States, Goodlad (1984:316) adopts a similar position:

> The success of professional preparation, it seems to me, depends on the degree to which programs are able to separate beginners from the primitive or outworn techniques of their predecessors. If we were to set out to provide the most advanced preparation for future doctors, surely we would not intern them with those whose solution to every illness is blood-letting.

While one might argue that under proper university supervision the "faults" with practice in the field can be highlighted and critically examined by the student teacher, and thus constitute an appropriate learning activity, the potential for negative influence is still present. Alternatively, the time used by a practicum in a university-based preparation program might be spent exploring conceptual issues in greater depth in order to provide students with a stronger and more extensive knowledge base from which to begin their teaching careers. Weaning them into the world of real classrooms could then be undertaken by some form of a first-year intership, such as that described in Alberta by Friesen et al. (1987). If this were the case, however, interns would need to be placed with carefully selected, "appropriate" teachers in order to maximize the possibility of the successful transfer of theory into practice.

The "Mark" Orientation. In March, 1987, I had the opportunity to attended a special seminar given by Dr. Lilian Katz, a visiting scholar from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. During her presentation she mentioned that, for the first time in decades, she was now teaching undergraduate education students. In a voice bordering on dismay and incredulousness, she related for the audience her shock in learning that their primary concerns were for the mark they would receive. It irritated her to find that the questions they asked in class and the academic activities they undertook on their own were centered on clearly delineating the path to an acceptable grade in the course. She lamented the fact that their concerns were for "performance goals," differentiating these from "learning goals," and worried that this sort of behaviour was learned and reinforced during the years of elementary and secondary schooling.

I witnessed the same behaviour with many of the Early Childhood students. It is an oversimplification to suggest that university students are only motivated by grades, but for many of them grades are an important consideration. And while I have little "hard" data to support my claim, I suspect that there frequently *is* an overemphasis on marks and grade scores in K-12 classrooms. Shapiro (1977:162) tells us:

> There is something anomalous in the fact that professional people think they should put more credence in the results of a forty-five minute test than in the synthesis of knowledge and impressions gained in day-to-day, yearlong contact with a child. It suggests the extent to which people have been browbeaten by notions of scientific objectivity, mass norms, and the cult of testing expertise.

She later mentions that "tests seep into early childhood programs in the form of prepackaged curricula designed to lead to high scores on achievement tests" (Shapiro, 1977:162-163). During this past year I've had similar experiences at the school where my daughter attended grade four. At one parent-teacher session her math teacher, in order to show us where she ranked in the class, displayed a large sheet of paper on which were written the marks the children had received on tests and assignments throughout the year. He referred to this master sheet with almost every question asked, as if my daughter only existed as a series of numbers on an impersonal piece of paper; as if who she was and what she did could only be ascertained by looking at a mark. She told us later that the marks she and her classmates received on tests were occasionally announced aloud in class, and that those at the lower end were invariably teased by the other children.

If examples like this are in any way typical of what goes on in other classrooms at other grade levels, there is little wonder that performance goals supersede learning goals for many teachers and children.

For the Early Childhood students, of course, their career aspirations contributed significantly to their performance-oriented behaviour. I've often wished that I could have told them that the emphasis on marks was misplaced. But I've had colleagues, many of whom are in senior administrative positions in school districts, tell me that, particularly in times of restraint, only those graduates with the highest marks get as far as a personal interview.

A friend once told me that you can't teach what you don't know. We were talking about the sorts of people who should be allowed to enter teacher preparation programs and about the admission criteria which should be employed. His argument was that one should pay careful attention to the marks applicants had received in other academic endeavours. The assumption, of course, was that a mark was a reasonable indicator of what a person knows about a given subject. Perhaps his assertion is correct. But as I reflect on my experiences with the class of twenty-seven Early Childhood students, I can honestly say that the ones in whose hands I would place the education of my children would not *necessarily* be those who had the highest marks.

A Closing Comment

Gareth Morgan (1983c:405) suggests "that the process of knowing involves a process of forming and transforming, and that in knowing our world, we also form and transform ourselves."

There is no doubt that in the course of conducting this study I have been forced to confront previously held views on teaching, learning, and teacher education. As maudlin as it sounds, I am not the same person who began this research project. The very act of taking part in a class on early childhood education - an area I previously knew only through the experiences of my daughter and the staffroom banter in the consolidated school where I taught for a number of years - has opened my eyes to the world of young children and the critical importance of their education. I recall how, in that school, there seemed to be an unstated truth that high school teachers enjoyed greater status than elementary teachers. It was almost as if anyone could teach the lower grades, but only those with a subject specialty could enter a classroom with a group of adolescents. I believe that all teachers are important, but this experience has made me realize the vital role of those teachers who meet our children in the first years of formal schooling.

Prior to this undertaking, I had never given much thought to the notion of who does the directing in a learning situation. In my classroom (senior high school), students sat in rows most of the time and only gathered into groups if the situation called for it. While they participated in frequent discussions and guided themselves in many activities, there is little doubt that I did a lot of directing. This experience hasn't caused me to think that this system should be abandoned and replaced by a more open instructional approach. But it has made me critically reflect on the practices I employed as a teacher, and there is little doubt in my mind that it will influence my approach to teaching in the future. I see this as a healthy activity. In fact, I believe critical reflection is perhaps the ultimate form of professional development.

I have devoted many years to the practice of teaching and the study of education. Only as a result of this study, however, have I begun to view a practicum in a teacher education program as anything but an obvious necessity. I think it is important for prospective teachers to have an opportunity to develop their own classroom skills. But if this can't take place under the supervision of individuals who are themselves knowledgeful and competent about learning and pedagogy, and who will support and encourage the difficult task of transferring theory into practice, then placing novice teachers in randomly selected classrooms may be miseducative at best.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Initial Interview

Initial Interview

1. a. In what year were you born?
   b. In what community were you born?
   c. Where were you raised?
   d. What level of formal education did your father attain? Mother?
   e. What is your father's occupation? Mother's?

2. a. What do you remember of your years in elementary school?
   b. Do any teachers stand out in your memory?
   c. What do you remember about your years in junior and senior high school?
   d. Do any teachers come to mind?

3. a. When did you make the decision to enter teaching?
   b. Why did you choose this occupation?
   c. Did any individuals influence your decision to become a teacher? Who?
   d. Did you ever seriously consider any other career possibilities? Which?
   e. What did your parents (husband) think of your choice to become a teacher?
   f. When you entered this program, was it your intention to focus on early childhood education? When did this come about? Why?

4. a. What do you expect to gain from this teacher preparation program?
   b. What are your thoughts about the program so far?
   c. What has the practicum experience been like? Any major concerns? Positive experiences?

d. What are your thoughts about the non-education courses you've taken thus far? Professors?

e. What are your thoughts about the education courses you've taken to this point? Professors?

5. a. Can you describe what you'd like to be doing 5-10 years from now?

b. Once you acquire a full-time position, what do you think will be your primary responsibilities (role, purposes) as a teacher?

APPENDIX 2

Early Childhood Log Sheet

WEEKLY LOG

Date__________ __________ Name____________________________ Class____________________

Areas	Daily Plan	Comments, questions, or topics for discussion
The Child (green)		
Family/ Environment (pink)		
Foundation Knowledge (white)		
Learning Experiences (orange)		
Personnel (yellow)		
Professional Resources (red)		
Facilities (blue)		
Personal Planning (purple)		
Lab and/or out of class		